Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • Mar/April 2016 • $4.50

How to Identify an AVATAR

ALSO:

The 40-Year History Of ISKCON Padayātrā

Judging Without Understanding: The Recipe For Ruining Relationships

Does Āsana Equal Yoga?

Demigod Father, Demon Son

Ecclesiastes And the Bhagavad-gītā

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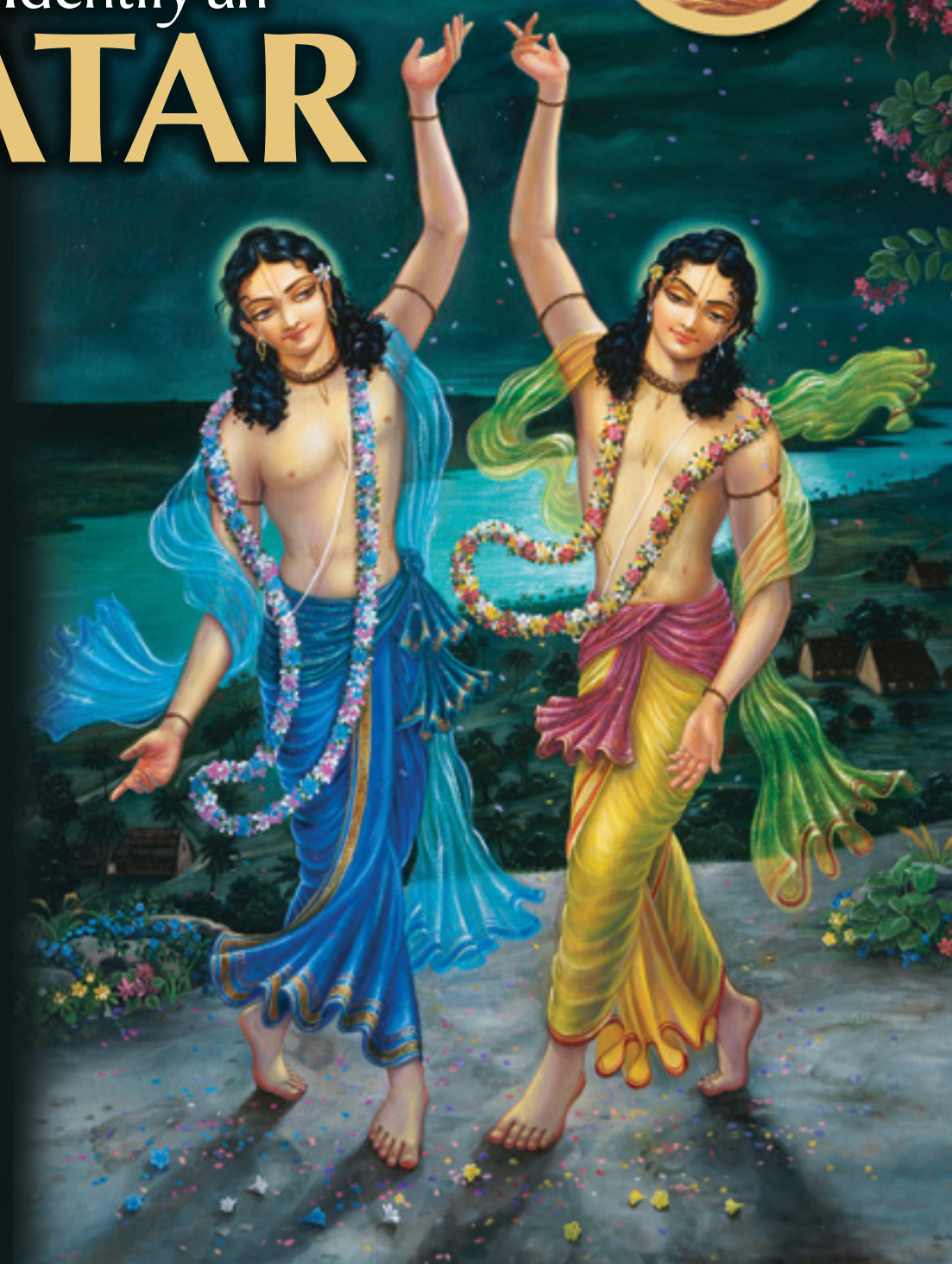

Assisting you in your quest for the Absolute Truth

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Founded 1944 • Vol. 50, No. 2 • March/April, 2016

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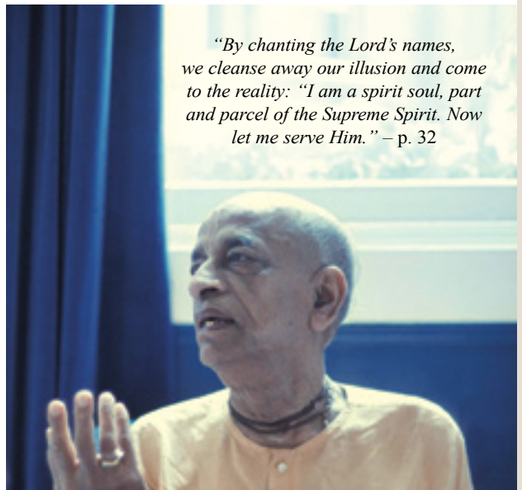
COVER According to the Vedic scriptures, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (dressed in yellow) and Nityānanda Prabhu, who appeared in Bengal in the late fifteenth century, are true avatars, incarnations of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His brother, Balarāma. Please see Śrīla Prabhupāda's lecture on avatars and Vedic authority, beginning on page 7. (Painting by Gāndarvikā Devī Dāsī.)



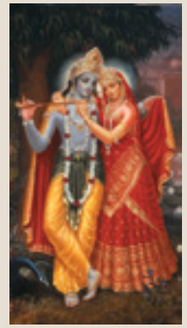
"By chanting the Lord's names, we cleanse away our illusion and come to the reality: "I am a spirit soul, part and parcel of the Supreme Spirit. Now let me serve Him." – p. 32

WELCOME

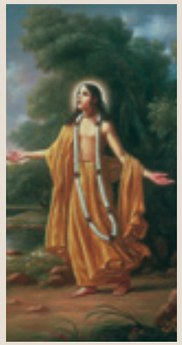
As we continue our year-long celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, we begin this issue with a lecture Śrīla Prabhupāda gave in December 1966, five months after he incorporated the Society. A little more than a year earlier, he had begun teaching the *Bhagavad-gītā* in Butler, Pennsylvania, shortly after his arrival in America. Later, regular *Gītā* classes were at the heart of his first temple, in New York City. Then, in November 1966, he added *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* classes, responding to the desire of his early disciples to hear from this revered book on the life and teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa for this age. In the verse Prabhupāda speaks on in this issue, Lord Caitanya tells a disciple that to identify an avatar of God, we must rely on the infallible authority of the Vedic scriptures.

This issue also commemorates the fortieth anniversary of ISKCON Padayātrā. Since 1976, devotees have spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness by walking more than 160,000 miles in countries all over the world. Gaurāṅgī Devī Dāsī, coordinator for the Padayatra Worldwide Ministry since 2012, presents some highlights of this important legacy of Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. – *Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor*



Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are together the one Supreme Absolute Truth.



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the combined incarnation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, inaugurated the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa five hundred years ago.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.

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The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

FOUNDER (under the direction of His Divine Grace Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda) **His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda** (1896–1977)

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Letters

Why Are You Against the Movies?

I have read amazing articles by Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees about amazing movies like *Star Wars.* I even read an article about the 2009 film *Avatar* and an editorial from an Indian BTG issue in English that was about Harry Potter. At the same time, you write articles that attack people's love for going to the movies, thus forcing them to stop. Why are you against this fun and exciting experience of going to the movies? Are you against entertainment or something? Please write back. And please don't give me a "What do you think?" Because I don't have a clue.

Narottam Cecil
Via the Internet

Our reply: As the editors of BTG, we're always somewhat uncomfortable when devotees submit articles about movies. Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly did not want his disciples to go to movies, and when a devotee writes about a movie, that suggests he or she went to see it, whether or not that's true. We know that at least one article you mention was written by someone who didn't see the movie but only read about it. In any case, your letter suggests that our concerns are warranted, since you seem to have taken devotees' writing about movies as possible justification for going to movies.

One could argue that seeing a movie to write a Kṛṣṇa conscious article about it is ok. Still, the general rule is that everything in a devotee's life should be directly connected to Kṛṣṇa. The purpose of the rules devotees follow is to always remember Kṛṣṇa. Even if you occasionally remember Kṛṣṇa while watching a movie, the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to do things directly connected to Kṛṣṇa, such as hearing about Him and chanting His holy names. Mundane movies are not in that category.

With few exceptions, going to movies is sense gratification, pure and simple, and serious devotees are diligently trying to replace sense gratification with Kṛṣṇa consciousness and devotional service. The practice is *bhakti-yoga,* and it requires discipline. Neither Śrīla Prabhupāda nor any of his disciples with disciples of their own would recommend going to movies. You might think it's enjoyable, but that enjoyment is harmful to your real self-interest, your progress in spiritual life.

Here's one example of the many times Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke against movie-going:

> The materialistic persons, they are simply busy for satisfying the senses. Go to the hotel, satisfy the tongue, go to the cinema, hear the cinema song, see nice girls, and so on, so on. But these devotees are not interested at all. The cinema is here, a few steps away, but you will never see a student or a disciple of Kṛṣṇa consciousness go to that nonsense place. . . . It is practical. The more you engage yourself in devotional service, the more you will forget your sense gratification process. And as soon as you become completely detestful of sense gratification, then you are a liberated person, fit for going back to home, back to Godhead. This is the process. (Lecture, Bombay, 26 November 1974)

If you find these points hard to accept, we suggest you read books by Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples and become more convinced of their essential message. Life is short, and success in life – attaining pure love for God – is difficult to attain. We don't have time to waste by watching movies. Besides, once you taste the spiritual pleasure of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the so-called enjoyment of anything this word has to offer will pale in comparison.

Categories of Yoga

Thanks to Hari Parāyaṇa Dāsa for the excellent analytical treatise on *bhakti* ["Bhakti: The Only Transcendental Yoga," Nov/Dec 2015], from both Śrīla Prabhupāda's and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's points of view. My question: Where do ordinary *sthāne sthitāḥ śrutigatām* [translated in the reply below] like us fall in this categorization, and with what level of progress/success?

Pankaj Patel
Via the Internet

Hari Parāyaṇa Dāsa replies: In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.20.7) Kṛṣṇa recommends *jñāna-yoga* for those who wish to reject the material world, and *karma-yoga* for those who have great attachment to material pleasures. But a *sādhaka,* a serious practitioner of *bhakti-yoga,* is different – neither very disgusted with nor very attached to material life (*Bhāg.* 11.20.8).

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī classifies devotees who have material desires as *sakāma-karma-miśra bhaktas* (*Gītā* 7.16). Yet these devotees are (still) very dear to Kṛṣṇa (*Gītā* 7.18, Viśvanātha's commentary). The condition of a devotee unable to give up material desires is described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.20.27-28. Such a devotee condemns material enjoyment but cannot help partaking of it. Yet the devotee continues to worship Kṛṣṇa with faith and determination. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī writes, "He does not have inclination to unfav-orable things to the same extent that he has firm determination for *bhakti*."

Such a person will eventually succeed: "When an intelligent person engages constantly in worshiping Me through loving devotional service as described by Me, his heart becomes firmly situated in Me. Thus all material desires within the heart are destroyed." (*Bhāg.* 11.20.29) When we allow the sun of *kṛṣṇa-kathā* (Kṛṣṇa discussion) to shine in our heart, darkness cannot remain.

Therefore, *sthāne sthitāḥ śrutigatām* – hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā* from devotees while remaining situated in our current position – is the correct method, and approved by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya* 8.68). To advance in *bhakti,* we need not remove ourselves from our present responsibilities. Rather, we advance in *bhakti* by the primary method of *bhakti:* hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa.

Please write to us at: BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, Florida 32616, USA. Email: editors@krishna.com.

CORRECTION

In the Nov/Dec 2015 issue, Figure 3 in the article "Bhakti: The Only Transcendental Yoga" incorrectly indicates a progression from "Paramātmā realization" to "Merging into the impersonal Brahmajyoti." The Paramātmā-realized yogi does not go on to merge into the *brahmajyoti,* and Paramātmā realization does not come from *jñāna* but from *aṣṭāṅga-yoga.* We apologize for the error, which the author had corrected but somehow still made it into print.

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FOUNDER'S LECTURE

New York City – December 26, 1966

How to Identify an AVATAR

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu points to the Vedic scriptures as unerring spiritual authority.

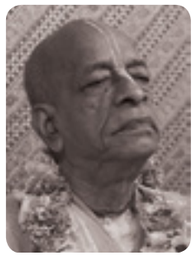
by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

sarvajña munira vākya – śāstra-'paramāṇa'
āmā-sabā jīvera haya śāstra-dvārā 'jñāna'

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, "The Vedic literatures composed by the omniscient Mahāmuni Vyāsadeva are evidence of all spiritual existence. Only through these revealed scriptures can all conditioned souls attain knowledge."

– Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 20.353



WE SHOULD always think that we are in the mode of ignorance. We are just trying to make progress from ignorance to goodness and then transcend. This is the process of spiritual realization. We should not think that we are perfect. We cannot be. God is. Only God is perfect, and we are all imperfect. Even in our so-called liberated stage we are still imperfect. Therefore one has to take shelter of authority, because constitutionally we are imperfect.

Lord Caitanya says, *āmā-sabā jīvera haya śāstra-dvārā 'jñāna.'* For real knowledge we have to consult the scriptures, *śāstra. Sādhu-śāstra-guru. Sādhu* means a pious, religious, honest person. One whose character is spotless is called a *sādhu. Śāstra* means scripture, and guru means the spiritual master. They are on an equal level. Why? Because the central point is scripture. The guru is considered liberated because he follows the scripture. The *sādhu* is considered honest and saintly because he follows scripture. Nobody can become a *sādhu* if he does not accept the principles of scripture. And nobody can be accepted as guru, or spiritual master, if he does not follow the principles of scripture. This is the test.

tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet
samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham

"To understand these things properly, one should humbly approach, with firewood in hand, a spiritual master who is learned in the *Vedas* and firmly devoted to the Absolute Truth. (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.12) *Śrotriyam* means that one who has accepted the Vedic literature, the *śāstra,* as the guide can be a guru, not an extravagant upstart who makes some group and religious principle of his own.

Sanātana Gosvāmī had asked Caitanya Mahāprabhu how to know who is an avatar. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says the medium for understanding

As predicted in the Vedic scriptures, Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared around five hundred years ago as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (dressed in yellow). With Nityānanda Prabhu, His chief associate, He introduced the religion for this age: the congregational chanting of the holy names of God.

is *śāstra,* and the direction is the guru. Sometimes we find a contradiction in the scripture, but that is not a contradiction; that is our poor fund of knowledge. I cannot understand; therefore the assistance of a guru, a spiritual master, is required. Here Lord Caitanya says that we have to see through the *śāstra* whether a person is an incarnation or not. We should not blindly accept anybody as an incarnation, because nowadays there are numberless "incarnations."

In the next verse He says,

avatāra nāhi kahe – 'āmi avatāra'
muni saba jāni' kare lakṣaṇa-vicāra

"An actual incarnation of God never says 'I am God' or 'I am an incarnation of God.' The great sage Vyāsadeva, knowing all, has already recorded the characteristics of the avatars in the *śāstras.*" This is another significance of an incarnation. An incarnation never says, "I am an incarnation of God." I have read a book about a big "avatar" in India. He was canvassing his students, "Do you now accept me as an incarnation? Do you now accept me as incarnation?" And the disciple was denying, "No." Then, after a time, the disciple said, "Yes, I accept you."

This is not an avatar. Here Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that an avatar does not canvass. Similarly, the guru does not canvass, the *sādhu* does not canvass. Automatically, by his qualities, he becomes accepted.

Those who are thinkers, *muni,* see the symptoms and specify, "Yes, here is an avatar." How are the symptoms of an avatar analyzed? The first symptom is that there is a reference in the *śāstra,* scripture, that in such and such time, such and such personality will come. He will be an incarnation of God. Even his father's name, his birthplace – everything is written in the scripture. We have to identify by *lakṣaṇa,* the symptoms. He'll come like this, and he'll act like this.

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu never said, "I am an avatar." But from His symptoms, from His characteristics, later on great sages, great philosophers decided that He's an avatar.

Here Sanātana Gosvāmī is trying to get Lord Caitanya to confirm that He is an avatar. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.5.32) the symptoms of the avatar for this age, Kali-yuga, are described: *kṛṣṇa-varṇaṁ tviṣākṛṣṇaṁ sāṅgopāṅgāstra pārṣadam.* He is in the category of Kṛṣṇa, but His complexion is nonblack, *akṛṣṇa.* He's always followed by confidential associates. And people who are intelligent worship Him by the process of *saṅkīrtana. Yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ. Su-medhasaḥ* means persons who have got good brain substance. Not foolish persons. *Su-medhasaḥ* – a man of great brain substance – can understand, "Oh, here is an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa." Lord Caitanya's appearance is spoken about in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* in the *Mahābhārata,* in the *Upaniṣads,* in the *Purāṇas.* There are many symptomatic explanations. But still there are many fools who do not accept these authoritative statements.

Accept or not accept, God's work and activities and characteristics will be known because God will be known. Lord Buddha, for example, is accepted as an incarnation in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* Emperor Ashoka patronized Buddhism. So Buddhism was broadcast throughout India and practically the whole of the Far East, and most people in these places became Buddhists. Practically the whole of India became Buddhist during Ashoka's time. But later on, Śaṅkarācārya drove against Buddhism. He wanted to establish the difference between Buddhism and Hinduism. Lord Buddha did not accept Vedic authority.

Vedic Authority

According to Hindu culture, if somebody does not accept the Vedic authority, then he's not an authority.

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There are different parties in India. Generally two parties: the Māyāvāda philosophers and the Vaiṣṇava philosophers, or the impersonalists and the personalists. Ultimately, the Māyāvādī philosophers say that God, the Supreme Absolute Truth, is impersonal, and the Vaiṣṇava philosophers say that in the ultimate end, the Absolute Truth is a person, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. *Kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam* (*Bhāg.* 1.3.28).

This is the little difference between the two groups, and they stick to their positions and fight. "Fight" means by philosophical arguments. That has been going on for a very long time. But both of them belong to the *sanātana* (eternal) Hindu dharma because both of them will talk on the Vedānta philosophy. They give different interpretations, but they cannot say, "We don't accept Vedānta." Oh, then the view is at once rejected.

One must give an interpretation on the Vedānta philosophy; then he'll be accepted as an *ācārya.* Three things: Vedānta philosophy, *Bhagavad-gītā,* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* One must be able to explain these three books. Then he'll be accepted as an *ācārya.* These are the principles.

Recently, impersonalists have also accepted Kṛṣṇa. Śaṅkarācārya accepted Kṛṣṇa. He said *sa bhagavān svayam kṛṣṇa:* "Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead." People may misunderstand that Kṛṣṇa may be some other Kṛṣṇa because the present followers of Śaṅkarācārya are interpreting in that way. But Śaṅkarācārya, just to specify Kṛṣṇa, said *devakī vāsudeva jātaḥ.* This means Kṛṣṇa who appeared Himself as the son of Devakī and Vasudeva. That Kṛṣṇa.

Śaṅkarācārya has a nice prayer to Kṛṣṇa. The present followers of Śaṅkarācārya cannot say that this is not composed by Śaṅkarācārya. It is very famous.

bhaja govindaṁ bhaja govindaṁ
bhaja govindaṁ mūḍha mate
prāpte sannihite kāle maraṇe
na hi na hi rakṣati ḍukṛṇ-karaṇe

Śaṅkarācārya has made many prayers about Kṛṣṇa, especially about His Vṛndāvana pastimes. He has worshiped Kṛṣṇa in many ways. And this is his last composition of poetry. *Bhaja govindaṁ bhaja govindaṁ bhaja govindaṁ mūḍha mate:* "You fools, you *mūḍha mate*." *Muḍha mate* means "you fools." He was addressing the whole world: "You fools." *Bhaja govindam:* "Just become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Just become Kṛṣṇa conscious." *Prāpte sannihite kāle maraṇe na hi na hi rakṣati ḍukṛṇ-karaṇe:* "You are philosophizing. You are talking on grammar and this way and that way." Such people want to establish impersonalism from *Bhagavad-gītā* by the strength of grammar. This is nonsense. They want to understand God through grammar. God is so cheap that He can be understood through grammar. Therefore Śaṅkarācārya specified, *prāpte sannihite kāle maraṇe:* "When death will catch you, your grammar will not save you, you fools. Please become Kṛṣṇa conscious."

That was the instruction of Śaṅkarācārya. And he has especially mentioned *Bhagavad-gītā* and Ganges water. "A little Ganges water and a little study of *Bhagavad-gītā* will save you from many dangerous positions."

Because Kṛṣṇa displays the identifying symptoms, even Śaṅkarācārya has accepted Him as Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But there are many people who do not accept.

Wisdom from Rāmānuja's Guru

Śrī Yāmunācārya, a great devotee, is understood to be the spiritual master of Rāmānujācārya. He was a great king, and later on he became a great devotee. Within the Rāmānuja *sampradāya*, the line of Rāmānuja, there are twelve great *ācāryas,* and

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millennia ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in b**u**t, long **ā** like the **a** in f**a**r (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in ev**a**de, long **ī** like the **i** in p**i**que. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **ri**m, and **c** like the **ch** in **ch**air. Pronounce consonants like **ch**, **jh**, and **dh** as in staun**ch-h**eart, hed**ge-h**og, and re**d-h**ot. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh**. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or his great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

he's one of them. He has written a very nice verse:

tvāṁ śīla-rūpa-caritaiḥ
parama-prakṛṣṭaiḥ
sattvena sāttvikatayā prabalaiś ca
śāstraiḥ
prakhyāta-daiva-paramārtha-vidāṁ
mataiś ca
naivāsura-prakṛtayaḥ prabhavanti
boddhum

"O my Lord, those influenced by demoniac principles cannot realize You, although You are clearly the Supreme by dint of Your exalted activities, forms, character, and uncommon power, which are confirmed by all the revealed scriptures in the quality of goodness and the celebrated transcendentalists in the divine nature." (*Stotra-ratna* 12) *Asura prakṛtayaḥ* means the atheistic demons. In the Vedic literature, the atheists are called demons, *rākṣasas.* Rāvaṇa, for example, was a great scholar in Vedic philosophy. He was the son of a *brāhmaṇa,* and he was very learned. And he materially advanced his kingdom so nicely that his capital was called Golden Lanka. He was so rich. In every way – in education, in opulence, in power, everything – he was so great. His only fault was that he was an atheist.Therefore he's called *rākṣasa* and *asura.* The only fault of all the *asuras* mentioned in the *śāstra* is that they are atheists. Otherwise, in education and opulence, they are very much advanced.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* (7.15),

na māṁ duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ
prapadyante narādhamāḥ
māyayāpahṛta-jñānā
āsuraṁ bhāvam āśritāḥ

"Those miscreants who are grossly foolish, who are lowest among mankind, whose knowledge is stolen by illusion, and who partake of the atheistic nature of demons do not surrender unto Me." As soon as one becomes an atheist, oh, it is very difficult to convince him. Therefore our preaching should avoid the atheist class. Of course, the current time is so nice that 99.9% of the people are atheists. So we have to take the risk of talking with atheists also. But generally it is advised that preachers should not talk to the atheist class because they simply argue. Their only point is to simply argue and waste your time. That's all. They'll never accept, however you may try to convince them with reason and argument.

Great sages accept the evidence in authorized Vedic scriptures, but the atheistic persons will never accept it.

In this verse by Yāmunācārya, written, say, about one thousand years ago, we see that the atheists were also present then.

Yāmunācārya writes *prabalaiś ca śāstrair.* There are different kinds of authority. The first authority is authorized *śāstra,* scripture. There the descriptions of an avatar, his characteristics and his work, are mentioned. And *prabala* means the very powerful. Vedānta philosophy is very powerful, *Bhagavad-gītā* is very powerful, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is very powerful. So we give evidence from these powerful *śāstras.*

Then: *prakhyāta-daiva-paramārtha-vidāṁ mataiś ca.* Another authority is the opinion of great, famous stalwarts, like Vyāsadeva. Who can be more famous than Vyāsadeva? He's the compiler of all the Vedic literature. And Nārada is the greatest *ṛṣi,* sage. Asita, Devala, Vasiṣṭha – there are many stalwarts. The twelve *mahājanas* are great authorities: Brahmā, Nārada, Lord Śiva, the Kumāras, Kapila, Manu, Prahlāda, Janaka, Bhīṣma, Bali Mahārāja, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and Yamarāja. But even though great stalwarts and sages accept the evidence in authorized scriptures, still the *asura prakṛti,* the atheistic persons, will never accept it. They'll never accept. They'll simply go on arguing.

The Vedic process is that if something is mentioned in the *Vedas* and accepted by the previous *ācāryas,* then it is accepted as fact. That's all. I have nothing to bother about. This is the simple process.

Suppose I am a fool number one. That doesn't matter. I may be a fool, but if I follow the previous authorized *ācāryas,* then I am all right. If an innocent child catches the hand of his father, then he's all right; he can cross the street. This is the Vedic process. There is no research in the Vedic process. What research will you do? What sense have you got? You shall research about God? There is no research. Research is not accepted in Vedic philosophy. You have to accept the authority. That's all.

Bhīṣma's Testimony

Here Yāmunācārya says, *tvāṁ śīla-rūpa-caritaiḥ parama-prakṛṣṭaiḥ:* "Your most eminent character, form, and activities." Kṛṣṇa's character was certified by Bhīṣma, Arjuna's grandfather. So in age he was also Kṛṣṇa's grandfather. He was a great warrior, a *kṣatriya* fighting on the battlefield. He's called *pitāmaha,* "grandfather." His character is spotless. Although he was living as a householder, he was more than any sage or any saint. He was the son of the Ganges, and his father, Mahārāja Śāntanu, after the death of Bhīṣma's mother wanted to marry again. At that time Bhīṣma was about twenty years old. Instead of getting the son married, the father was himself very much anxious to get married. So he selected a very beautiful girl, but she belonged to a low-caste family. *Kṣatriyas* could marry from anywhere. That was the injunction. They were not within the boundary of the caste system. The girl was a fisherman's daughter. Mahārāja Śāntanu wanted to marry that girl, but her father was very cunning.

He said, "No, no. I cannot offer my daughter to you. You are an old man. You have your son. So I cannot offer her."

He was bargaining.

"No? Why? I shall give your daughter a palace. We shall enjoy so many years."

"No. I can offer you my daughter only if my daughter's son becomes the king after your death. Then I can offer her to you."

"Oh, I cannot agree to that, because my eldest son is living."

Bhīṣma understood, "My father wants to marry that girl, but the only impediment is that the father of the girl is making a condition that her son should be king, and my father is declining because I am present and I should be king."

Oh, he at once approached the girl's father.

"What is your condition, sir?"

"This is my condition."

"All right, I shall not accept the kingdom of my father. Your daughter's son will be king. I agree to this."

"Oh, no. You may agree, but your son will make the claim to the throne, because you are the proprietor, the prince."

"Oh, you think so? Then I shall not marry. Is that all right?"

He promised, "I shall never marry in my life. That's all right? Then marry your daughter to my father."

He was so pious and so strict. Bhīṣma was a *brahmacārī* from the very beginning of life, but at the Rājasūya-yajña, he proclaimed Kṛṣṇa's superiority in self-control. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira performed the Rājasūya-yajña. When one performs that sacrifice, all the princes of the world are invited, and they select him as the emperor of the world. That is called Rājasūya-yajña. So in that *yajña,* all the princes of the world were present, and Kṛṣṇa was proposed to become the president of that assembly, although He was a relatively young man. Śiśupāla and Dantavakra were very much against Kṛṣṇa, and they objected: "Oh, Kṛṣṇa cannot be the president. There are many others more qualified." But Bhīṣma recommended, "Nobody present here has the spotless character of Kṛṣṇa. When He was sixteen years old, He was surrounded by girls, but He had no sex desire. I am a *brahmacārī* from my birth, but I think I could not be such a restrained personality as Kṛṣṇa." He recommended like that. That is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata.* This is character.

So Yāmunācārya says, "Your character, Your beauty, and Your wonderful work are accepted by great authorities. You are mentioned in the *śāstras.* In spite of all this, the atheists will never accept You." The characteristics of an avatar are there in the *śāstra.* We should follow its authority. This is the important point.

Thank you very much.

A Pause for Prayer

Painting by Pāṇḍu Dāsa

"O my merciful Lord Caitanya, may the nectarean Ganges waters of Your transcendental activities flow on the surface of my desert-like tongue. Beautifying these waters are the lotus flowers of singing, dancing, and loud chanting of Kṛṣṇa's holy name, which are the pleasure abodes of unalloyed devotees. These devotees are compared to swans, ducks, and bees. The river's flowing produces a melodious sound that gladdens their ears."

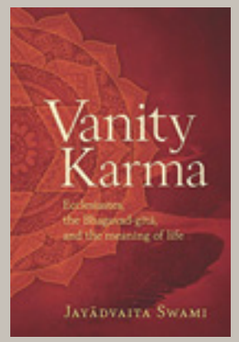
– Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta,
Ādi-līlā 2.2

BOOK EXCERPT

What profit in all our labors?

An Old Testament sage holds before us the contradictions of human life.

by Jayādvaita Swami



"Vanity of vanities, says Qohelet. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" So begins the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. By "vanity," Qohelet (pronounced ko-hell-et), the book's sagacious speaker, means that life is absurdly meaningless. Yet despite this pessimistic view, Qohelet urges that we enjoy life.

The third chapter of Ecclesiastes opens with the famous lyrical passage "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven. . . ." But then at once, in the verses below, he returns to a despairing view. Jayādvaita Swami's commentary, with a Vedic perspective, explores the text.

3:9–11: Working for God knows what

[9]What profit has he who works in that in which he labors? [10]I have seen the travail that God has given man to be busy with. [11]He has made everything fitting for its time. He has also set the world in their hearts, yet they cannot find out the work that God has done from the beginning to the end.

"Times" in Context. Alas!

Standing alone, Qohelet's "catalogue of times" may seem a lovely poem, celebrating the way all things come and go, each taking its suitable turn within the cycle of nature's divine arrangement. "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world."

With Qohelet, we can't get off so easy.[1] The scholar George Barton aptly sums up what Qohelet has to say: "Human activities are limited to certain times and seasons in which man goes his little round doing only what other men have done before. His nature cries out for complete knowledge of the works of God, but God has doomed him to ignorance, so that the best he can do is to eat and drink and ignorantly get what little enjoyment he can within these limitations."

"What gain have the workers from their toil?" Qohelet asks. And his answer is plain: None at all. Under the sun, which pants in the futile labor of its vast and endless cosmic rounds, little men labor for nothing, time forcing them to plod through their routines within

From *Vanity Karma: Ecclesiastes, the Bhagavad-gita, and the meaning of life* (Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 2015, ISBN 0-89213-449-6, trade paperback $15.95, www.vanitykarma.com), a cross-cultural commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes. Available at the Krishna.com store and elsewhere. (For this excerpt, we've retained the book's style for dealing with Sanskrit words.)

Sisyphus by Titian, Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain

In Greek mythology, Sisyphus is condemned to forever carry a boulder uphill and watch it roll back down again.

the prison walls of days and seasons, year after meaningless year.

"I have seen the business God has given everyone to be busy with," Qohelet says. And he has already told us (in 1:13) what kind of business that is – "an unhappy business," all amounting to nothing more than "vanity and a chasing after wind." We are busy in useless labor. And why? Because God has stuck it on us.

God has made every one of our engagements "suitable for its time" and made them all absurdly meaningless and pointless. Worse still, he has tantalized, vexed, and frustrated us by putting into our hearts something crucial we'll never get to the end of.

The Hebrew word for what that is has been variously translated and argued over. God has put "the world" in our hearts, or put "eternity" there, or "the course of the world," or "a sense of past and future." Or he has put "ignorance" there. Or if (as several commentators have suggested) scribes have inadvertently switched two Hebrew letters, what God has put there is "toil" – mental labor.

However you take it, God has made us in such a way that we long to understand what's going on – what the meaning of our life is, why the world was made the way it is, what its purpose is, and what our place in it might be. We want to know how our small lives fit into the great picture of endless time, why time exists at all, and what the "right" times might be for the things we have to do. God has made us hungry to know what is ever concealed from us, and yet he keeps it concealed, and keeps us ignorant and frustrated.

"I Have Seen"

Here Qohelet seems forced to contend with the consequences of the way he has chosen to gain understanding. How will we understand what is what? By direct experience – by gathering evidence with our senses, especially by the powerful sense of sight. "I have seen . . . ," Qohelet says. And he will say it several times more: "I saw . . . I saw . . . I turned and saw . . ." And if we follow Qohelet's method, after seeing we will sift and weigh what we have seen – ponder it, analyze it, dwell on it, theorize about it, try somehow to make sense of it.

And ultimately we will fail. We will run up against the limitations of our senses: There's only so much we can see, and there's so much we can't. Put a thin piece of paper in front of my eyes, and I can't see beyond it. Put too much distance or too much haze, and my vision starts to blur. If something's too small I can't see it, or even if too big. I can't see my own eyelid, the closest thing to the eye. And at night if you turn off the lights I can't see anything at all. With my mighty power of sight, I can't see sounds. I can't see the wind. I can't see anything that's hidden. And all my other senses bump into the same sort of limitations.

I can extend my senses with various devices – spectacles, microscopes, telescopes, amplifiers, sensors for heat and movement – but shortly I'll come to an extended set of limits. There's no way around this. However many rings I burst through, I will always find the next. However much I can see, there's always so much I can't. My vision will always be boxed in.

And when I try to make sense of what I see, I run into the shortcomings of my mind. I see a rope and think it's a snake. I see a woman and mistake her for a man. I see someone smile at me and don't realize the smile is meant for someone else. I see a stray toy on the road when in fact it's an improvised bomb.

And these are just basic errors in the mind's work of recognizing patterns, of turning sight into perception. Now extend such mental failings to the work of understanding life as a whole. When I try to make ultimate sense of what I see, when I try to find ultimate meaning, my mind will inevitably take wrong turns, or drive about in circles, or get stuck in mental traffic and finally just give out.

According to the Vedic teachings, we are all shot through with four defects: imperfect senses, a tendency to make mistakes, a tendency to get carried away by illusion, and a tendency to cheat. (Despite our imperfect senses and our proneness to make mistakes and get bewildered, we come on like we've figured it all out. Cheating, no?)

In short: Direct experience and inductive reasoning may be fine within limits, but when we come to ultimate questions these methods fail, and so we "cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end."

Even if we think that there's no God, that nature just runs on its own, we can't be sure of that either. Nor figure out how or why existence pops into existence, nor where it's finally headed or why. Finally, whatever we think and however much we think, the secret remains secret. As we find in the epic Mahābharata (Bhīṣma Parva, 5.22), *acintyāḥ khalu ye bhāvā na tāṁs tarkeṇa yojayet:* "That which lies beyond the power of thought cannot be understood by logic."

Direct experience and inductive reasoning may be fine within limits, but when we come to ultimate questions these methods fail.

3:12–13: Eat, drink, and have a good time toiling away

12 I know that there is nothing better
for them than to rejoice and to get
pleasure so long as they live. 13 And
also for any man to eat and drink
and enjoy pleasure in all his labor –
this is a gift of God.

Nothing Better?

When Qohelet says "I know that there is nothing better" we might well ask him, "How do you know?" All he can reliably tell us is what lies within his experience, not "all that is." So perhaps he could more defensibly say, "I know of nothing better."

But let's not argue with him, because in any case his conclusion doesn't seem one he's delighted with. "I know that there is nothing better," he says, and we might envision him saying it with a disappointed sigh. Again: Is this all? Nothing more than this?

Qohelet has come again to the same place where we found him in 2:24: Having failed at his experiment with pleasure (and that too on a royal level), he now commends as the best there is the very pleasure he has found meaningless and empty.

This is what the Bhāgavatam refers to as "chewing the chewed again and again." In tropical countries people often enjoy chewing fresh sugarcane, which yields a sweet and tasty juice. You chew the cane, relish the juice, and then leave the woody fiber aside. And that's it. If you try to chew the same cane again – okay, you might get a bit more juice, but not much, hardly enough to be worth it, and if after putting it aside the second time you pick it up and try again, what can you expect?

Such, the Bhāgavatam says, is the nature of material enjoyment. We try something and extract a little joy, and then try the same thing again, with diminished results, and then try it yet again. Soon whatever we're trying becomes dry, tasteless, and frustrating, but for lack of anything better we keep trying, "chewing the chewed," imagining there's still more joy to be had from it.

I could talk about kids and how quickly they tire of old toys, but let's go for the top: the pleasure of sex. Qohelet had it to the highest extent – "many concubines, the delights of men" – and at the end he told us what it came to: "vanity, and a chasing after wind." And now should we try it again? Our senses cry out for it, and our mind can picture how satisfying it will be *this time,* and at the end – disappointment.

The pleasure a human being gets out of eating, drinking, or sex is in essence the same as what a hog gets, or a dog, or a mosquito. Finally, eating is eating, sex is sex. And yet,

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Qohelet says, "there is nothing better."

In fact, he says there is "nothing better as long as they live." Even in old age, it seems, people still pursue the same pleasure. And so a study published in 2007[2] found that of American men between the ages of 65 and 74, nearly seven out of ten were "sexually active," and for men 75 through 85, nearly four out of ten. For more than half the men in the older group, this meant two or three times a month, and for one out of four, at least once a week. (For women in the same age groups the numbers were lower, in part because of not having a man: Men, on average, marry younger women, and men die somewhat earlier.) As the study's authors tell us, "The prevalence of sexual activity declines with age, yet a substantial number of men and women engage in vaginal intercourse, oral sex, and masturbation even in the eighth and ninth decades of life." And this despite arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and an array of troublesome physical ailments directly related to sexual performance. Amidst all this, Qohelet says, "I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live."

For those done with sex and too old to enjoy working, there's still the pleasure of eating and drinking and schmoozing with what's left of their friends and families. Nothing better? As long as they live? Alas!

And what's this about "taking pleasure in all their labor" – as many translations have it, "all their toil"? Toil, by definition, is not pleasurable but troublesome, wearisome, miserable. And toil is what Qohelet says. The Hebrew word – *'amal* – carries the same strongly negative sense. As we hear from the scholar C. L. Seow, in the Bible the word is closely linked with "extremely negative terms" – trouble, grief, evil, falsehood, vexation, lies, destruction, violence, affliction, poverty, deceit. *'Amal* – labor or toil – is not just work or effort but struggle, sweat, drudgery, travail. Is that what we're supposed to take pleasure in?

As I've mentioned before, the word does have a dual meaning. It can refer either to wearisome labor or to its results, what we earn by such labor – or it can refer to both. The two, after all, go together. More than going together, they are bound together. What we earn is a result of our toil, but in one sense our toil is the result of what we earn because it is for the sake of those earnings that we undergo the toil. Work brings us money, but money – the need or desire for it – makes us work. We work for happiness, but since the work itself is misery, the very pursuit of happiness makes us miserable.

That is why the Vedic sages advise that one not work for happiness at all. Happiness, they say, will come of its own accord. After all, no one seeks misery – no one works for it or stands in line for it – yet misery comes anyway, on its own. Then why not happiness as well? By nature's way, each time a living being is born his physical embodiment brings along with it a certain quota of happiness and distress. Both will find us, in whatever measure we are destined to receive. The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam therefore advises that one work only to keep body and soul together, for the sake of the true human project of spiritual inquiry. That alone should be the purpose of one's work.

This, the Bhāgavatam says, is the actual gift given by God for a human being: the ability to inquire about our purpose for existing, about ultimate meaning. But if that's not the gift we want, God (or nature, if you will) has others to offer – in essence, the same gifts offered to other creatures: some food, something to drink, some sex. And for such rewards a life of hard work.

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Here to Enjoy

Now, let's look at things another way. We all want to eat and drink and enjoy, and seeing the enjoyments we receive as a gift from God reflects a sense of gratitude toward the divinity, and a sense of humbleness. "So entirely dependent are we on the divine Being, that even the little which we enjoy, is not secured by our own plans and efforts, but by God's own arrangements." So writes the nineteenth-century biblical scholar Moses Stuart, with his usual thoughtful piety.

This fits well with what we've already heard from the Īśopaniṣad: "Whether alive or dull, all within this universe belongs to its controller, the Lord. What you may enjoy is only what he has set aside for you as your portion. One should not strive for other things, knowing well to whom they belong."

Without reference to God the nonreligious person may think, "I am here to enjoy, and by good luck or hard work I'll do it." And with reference to God the religious believer may think, "I am here to enjoy, and by God's grace I can hope to do so." For both, the central concern is their own enjoyment. And both, therefore, are "chasing after wind."

In the Bhagavad-gītā Krishna says, "Enjoyments born of stimulation for the senses are themselves the very sources of misery. They have a beginning and an end, and one who is wise does not delight in them."

Yet it is those enjoyments, those "gifts of God," that religious believers are often keen to receive. By prayers, by rituals, by following commandments, by "being good," they hope that God will grant them the gifts of good fortune, of peace and prosperity, of a bountiful life in which they can eat and drink and take pleasure in all the results of their work.

In the Vedic literature the part called *karma-kāṇḍa,* "the part concerning karma," deals with precisely such goals: How can we best act to reap the best material rewards? From the point of view of the follower of karma-kāṇḍa, a virtuous or religious life is worthwhile because it will bring us prosperity, which will enable us to enjoy (or after death gain us a welcome into a heavenly realm where we can enjoy still more).

Yet the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, in its opening stanzas, rejects such religious life as being materially motivated and as therefore a kind of spiritual fraud. In the name of religion or spirituality or dharma we seek pleasure for the tongue and the stomach and the little organ down below. Spiritual? The Bhāgavatam rejects such "fraudulent dharma" and invites us to discriminate between reality and illusion for the sake of our ultimate welfare and the attainment of the highest truth.

NOTES

1. And like Qohelet's poem, the lovely expression of contentment in the line above from Robert Browning has an ironic context. It's from a song Browning puts in the mouth of an exploited Italian orphan girl who had to work long wearisome hours at a silk mill, with only one day off in a year. The girl innocently sings the song while passing by the mill owner's wife and her lover, who have murdered the mill owner. "All's right with the world" indeed!
2. "A Study of Sexuality and Health among Older Adults in the United States." Lindau, Schumm, et al. *The New England Journal of Medicine,* 357;8, August 23, 2007.

Jayādvaita Swami spent many years on the Back to Godhead *staff, including serving as editor-in-chief throughout the 1990s. He oversees the African division of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust and travels extensively, teaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness around the world.*

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*Śacīnandana Swami and Mādhava Dāsa will lead the New Raman Reti community in the observance of Nṛsiṁha-caturdaśī on May 20.

Baḍa Haridāsa will inspire and coordinate the *Kīrtana Skills Tutoring*. Tutors include Amala Harināma Dāsa, Nadia Maṇi Devī Dāsī, Nāndapriyā Devī Dāsī, and Prahlāda Dāsa.

Demigod Father, Demon Son

How a father's dying wish and Śrīla Prabhupāda's Gītā *changed one man's destiny.*

by Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa, as told to Jānakīnātha Dāsa

While distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books village to village, door to door, in remote parts of India, I invariably meet people who have been miraculously touched by Kṛṣṇa's mercy. One such person was Chandu, whom I met in Srirampur, Maharashtra. His tall stature and heavy build contrasted with his soft, humble demeanor. Curious to know his background, I asked him to tell me his story of choosing the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.– JD

Early Life

RIGHT FROM childhood I had a quarrelsome nature. My strong and stout body enabled me to bully others and fight with them. I would harass everyone and behave rashly. This made others hate and fear me, so most people kept their distance. My father was soft and gentle, a humble school-teacher devoted to *tulasī* and Lord Viṭṭhala. Local people wondered how such a person had conceived a tyrant like me.

At a young age I became the local leader of a political party. Lying, cheating, and manipulative dealings were my daily activities, and I drank alcohol and ate meat. My father would spend his day in devotional activities, while I was engrossed in fights and sense indulgence. Many people advised my father to somehow transform my character, but all his efforts failed. Finally he got me married, hoping that might change me.

My wife had a tough time handling me. Frustrated with my brute behavior, she would often leave home to visit her parents. I had been promoted to a higher rank within the party, and my corrupt dealings rose to even higher levels.

My father would often plead with me, "Dear son, at least once in your

life please read *Dnyaneshwari* [a commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* by Dnyaneshwar, a thirteenth-century Maharashtrian saint]."

I couldn't have cared less about this instruction. I was speeding towards the darkest region of hellish existence. I had opened a liquor shop and a nonvegetarian restaurant. Almost every night I would eat meat and drink alcohol, and then I would return home and beat up my wife or create trouble in my neighborhood. My family life began to break into pieces. "A demigod father, a demonic son" is how people referred to us.

Promise at the Deathbed

When my father was on his deathbed, I went near him, fully intoxicated.

I would take the plate and place it in front of the *mūrti* of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and in my half-asleep intoxicated state I would order Kṛṣṇa, "Eat!"

"At least once you should read *Dnyaneshwari,*" he said.

"I will," I said, and then he left this world.

Now that the last hindrance to my sinful enjoyment was gone, I fully dived into all kinds of indulgence. Days passed, many months passed. All the while my father's request kept surfacing in my mind, and I felt guilty about not fulfilling my promise.

Finally one day I entered the *pūjā* room, where I saw many sacred books bundled in a white cloth. I pulled out *Dnyaneshwari* and reluctantly began to read it. But I found the language too archaic and the message too cryptic. I was about to put the book back when I noticed in the same bundle Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* along with some small books.

I thought, "*Well,* Dnyaneshwari *is the same as* Bhagavad-gītā, *so let me try reading the* Gītā *instead.*"

I felt a special attraction towards the cover painting of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, where Kṛṣṇa is driving the chariot of His dear devotee.

I began regularly reading the *Gītā* in the bar and "preaching." Sitting on a chair, my legs sprawling over the table, I would hold a bottle of beer in one hand and the *Gītā* in the other. My audience consisted of fully intoxicated drunks who could barely lift themselves after their binge. The discussion would sometimes go on till midnight. This went on for about seven months.

On the Way to Kṛṣṇa

The *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.13) instructs us to offer food to God before we eat it.

yajña-śiṣṭāśinaḥ santo
mucyante sarva-kilbiṣaiḥ
bhuñjate te tvagham pāpā
ye pacanty ātma-kāraṇāt

"The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food which is offered first for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin." I began to follow this instruction. Reaching home late at night, fully drunk, I would wake my wife and ask her to prepare food. I would take the plate and place it in front of the *mūrti* of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and in my half-asleep intoxicated state I would order Kṛṣṇa, "Eat!" The *Bhagavad-gītā* had convinced me that God can accept food and eat it. But sometimes I would laugh at my crazy behavior, and I would feel that the *mūrti* was laughing back at me. Gradually, though, I developed a desire to render some service to God.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* and Śrīla Prabhupāda's explanations impressed me more and more. I read how Kṛṣṇa is pleased with anyone who tries to distribute His message to the masses, so I printed flyers containing the *mahā-mantra* and a short message from the *Gītā.* While I was distributing them, the local villagers asked me to give a short speech. I spoke on the *Gītā* for a few minutes, but I understood that to be genuine I needed to lead a purer life.

Once when I visited Pandharpur I saw a group of ISKCON Padayātrā devotees traveling village to village doing *harināma-saṅkīrtana.* Inside their bullock cart they had a huge picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda. I had seen many saints and so-called godmen, but I always doubted their authenticity and purity. When I saw Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, I was convinced that he was genuine, and I developed more faith in him.

Some days later, my friend Sudāmā Dāsa, an ISKCON devotee, visited my house.

"Do you know that in Pandharpur there is a temple of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the speaker of the *Bhagavad-gītā*?" he asked. "His Holiness Lokanāth Swami Mahārāja is going to give a series of lectures there. Why don't you attend?"

I was not sure what to say, but some divine force seems to have pushed me to say yes.

Let me try it once, I thought. *I don't have to commit to their process. I can always come back if I don't like them.*

As soon as I entered the ISKCON temple in Pandharpur and met the devotees, I could feel I was undergoing a mystical transformation. I felt a sense of peace and happiness. Sitting through the entire discourse, I was convinced that this was the path I needed to follow throughout my life. The seed of love and devotion was now firmly planted in the soil of my heart.

Upon returning to my village, I decided to begin a new life. I wound up my liquor and meat enterprise. I even gave up my political post and took up farming. I began to regularly chant the holy names of Kṛṣṇa, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra,* and to follow the four regulative principles.

It was amazing to see how easily I gave up my nasty habits. My family members were skeptical, unable to understand the change in me. Earlier all my actions were under the influence of alcohol. Now, seeing this miraculous transformation in my life, they wondered if I was acting under the influence of something more dangerous. But every morning I read the *Bhagavad-gītā,* and I introduced everyone in my home to the devotional way of life. After a few years, Lokanāth Swami Mahārāja offered me spiritual initiation, giving me the name Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa.

• • •

Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa now oversees a Kṛṣṇa conscious center in his village, and many local villagers attend the regular programs. His whole family is involved in various services, and they regularly distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

From Chandu to Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa – the story gives hope. It shows the power of *bhakti*, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which can raise anyone from the lowest level of ignorance to the highest level of enlightenment. It shows how potent Śrīla Prabhupāda's books are. And it shows how anyone who comes in contact with them will get the ultimate benefit.

Jānakīnātha Dāsa is a resident brahmacārī *at the ISKCON temple in Nashik, Maharashtra. He teaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness to college students.*

BBC Meditation

by Kṛṣṇa Dharma Dāsa

The author has been a regular British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) contributor since 1998. BBC Radio 2, where these meditations are aired, attracts from one million to eight million listeners, depending on the time of day. Thoughts from different contributors on topics assigned by the BBC are aired three or four times a day. This is the second in a series of eight meditations.

Spring

IN THE SPRING a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love, as Tennyson so delightfully said. Of course nowadays, bombarded as we are with suggestive images on all sides, it might turn the way of love rather more often than just in spring.

Certainly, though, spring is the season of reproduction, when nature renews herself and gives forth of her best. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says, "Of seasons I am flower-bearing spring." In other words, this is the season when we can most easily perceive God in his creativity, intelligence, and beauty.

As a theist, a believer in God, I am sometimes challenged by nonbelievers with that old chestnut Can you show me God? I am always at a loss to answer this question, since to me everything about this world shows me God. I find it to be an astonishing creation that I don't think we can ever fully comprehend. Year after year, the seasons come and go like clockwork, the sun rises and sets without fail, the planets stay in their orbits, and life in all its magnificent abundance and variety flourishes everywhere, never more obviously than in spring.

I believe that this couldn't have happened without intelligence. Everything is so perfectly adjusted and synchronized; I can't believe that it came about by chance. In Sanskrit, the language of the ancient sages of India, there is no word for chance, as it is a concept they do not acknowledge. The nearest equivalent to the word chance is a word that simply means unknown cause, as the sages believe everything in this world is cause and effect, and the ultimate cause is God.

Sir Isaac Newton once said, "Don't doubt the Creator, because it is inconceivable that accidents alone could control the universe" – which is a view that makes perfect sense to me. If intelligence is indeed controlling nature in all her intricate complexity, then it must be a pretty big intellect.

I have heard it said that we are always seeing God but we just don't recognize Him. So now that spring is here, I at least will once again be doing my best to make His acquaintance.

His ISKCON Branch

After decades of planning, in the 1960s and '70s Śrīla Prabhupāda established the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement by Lord Kṛṣṇa's supreme will.

by Sureśvara Dāsa

To honor the fiftieth anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's incorporation of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, BTG presents Part Five of a series celebrating Śrīla Prabhupāda's unique, transcendental position in ISKCON, as well as every follower's foundational relationship with him.

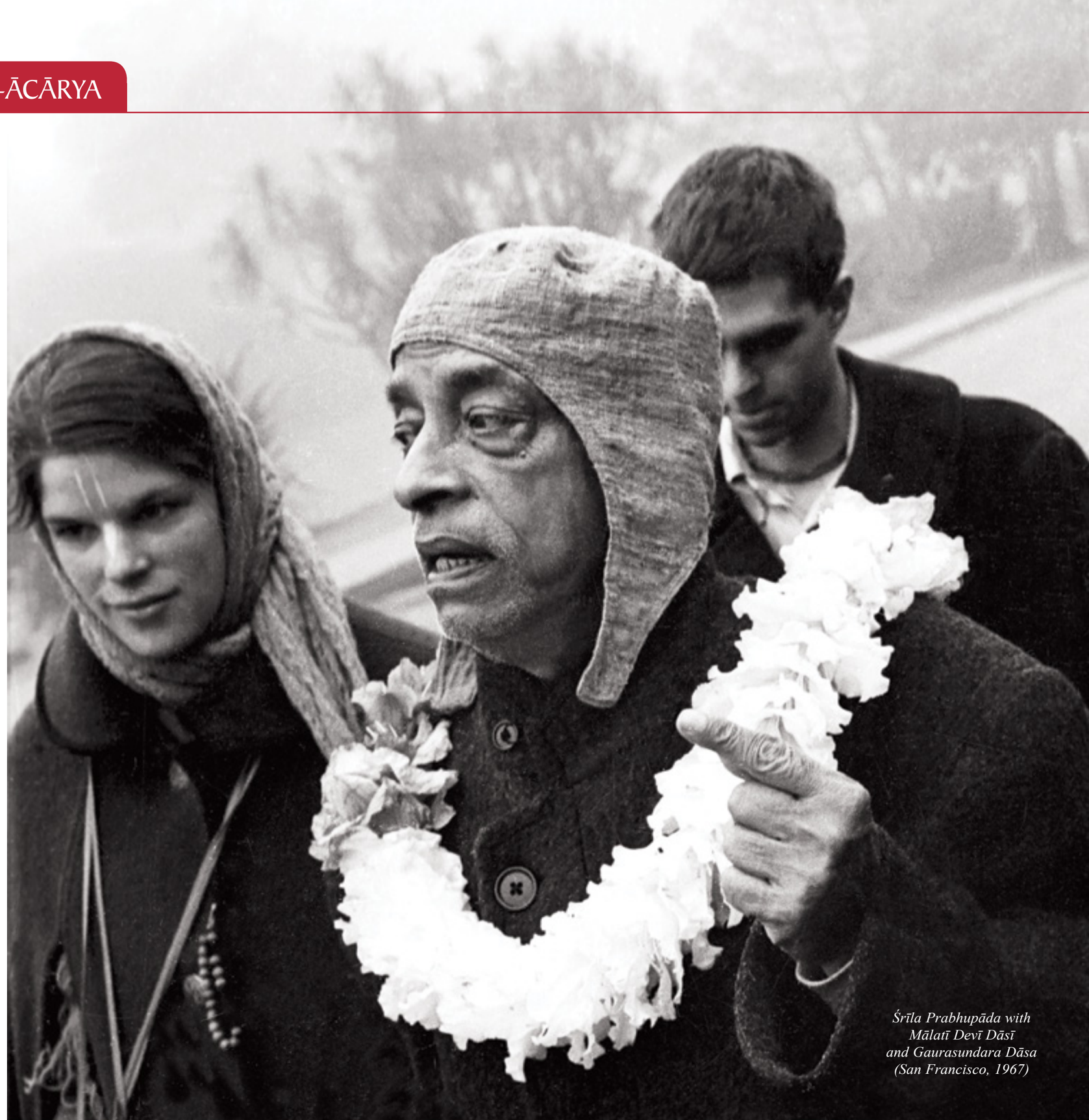
SHOCKING AS IT WAS, the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in January 1948 only intensified Abhay's desire to spread the movement of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta and Lord Caitanya. Unable to engage the Mahatma during his life, Abhay would now engage him in death to launch his mission as "the Geeta Nagari":[1]

"The Geeta-nagari will properly utilize the huge resources of Mahatma Gandhi memorial fund. . . . Gandhi's memory can be well preserved by his exemplary activities and not by simply constructions of huge buildings or deadstone statues. . . . Mahatma Gandhi was saintly reformer and his memorial fund may be utilized for the purpose of converting degraded persons into saintly order."[2]

Abhay urged the fund's director to "keep in motion [Gandhi's] spiritual movements":[3] his prayerful recitation of sacred sounds, his restoration of deities to temples, his recognition of everyone as a *harijana,* a person of God, and his ideal of a spiritually harmonious society. "The above four-fold Gandhi movements," Abhay wrote, "if done in an organized, scientific way supported by all the authentic scriptures of all [religions], will bring in that tranquility of peace [and a] respite of all harshness and bitterness of the present world, which we have longed for till now."[4]

But fresh from independence, India's leaders longed only to be "modern" and were uninterested in Abhay's spiritual proposals. Undaunted, in 1952 he found his first receptive audience among medical students in the northern Indian town of Jhansi. One of the students was able to connect Abhay with a pious estate executor who let him use the estate's property and buildings to teach, and to rebrand his mission as "The League of Devotees."

Canvassing among the students, Abhay ran an ad in the local newspaper: "Wanted



Śrīla Prabhupāda with Mālatī Devī Dāsī and Gaurasundara Dāsa (San Francisco, 1967)

– candidates from any nationality to qualify themselves as real Brahmins for preaching the teachings of Bhagwat Geeta for all practical purposes throughout the whole world. Deserving candidates will be provided with free boarding and lodging. Apply: A.C. Bhaktivedanta, Founder and Secretary of the League of Devotees . . .”[5]

The peace that the League of Nations had failed to bring after World War I, that the United Nations would also fail to bring after World War II, the League of Devotees would now bring through systematic spiritual education “and thereby achieve real unity and peace of the contending elements of the present world.”[6]

The events that would eventually compel Abhay to set aside the League, leave his family, accept the renounced order of life, and finally journey to the West have been well documented in *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta.* What concerns us here is how Prabhupāda established his mission as ISKCON, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, unfolding its purposes in phases.

A Branch of Lord Caitanya’s Movement

In his commentary to the *Śrī Caitanya-caritamṛta, Ādi-līlā* 12.73, Prabhupāda identifies ISKCON as a “branch” of the *bhakti-kalpa-taru,* Lord Caitanya’s “desire tree” of devotional service.[7] Though but a branch, his mission carries the spiritual power to transplant the “tree of love of Godhead” worldwide. Prabhupāda begged for that empowerment memorably in the poem he wrote the day he landed in America. As one verse reads: “O Lord, I am just like a puppet in Your hands. So if You have brought me here to dance, then make me dance, make me dance, O Lord, make me dance as You like.”[8]

During his first year in the West, when the Lord revealed to Prabhupāda he would have to start a fresh branch of His mission, the same educational purpose he had announced for the League of Devotees he now declared in ISKCON’s incorporation papers: “To systematically propagate spiritual knowledge to society at large and to educate all peoples in the techniques of spiritual life in order to check the imbalance of values in life and to achieve real unity and peace in the world.”[9] Six more points followed, all reflecting the same educational mood and mission.

In 1976, ten years after he had incorporated ISKCON, Prabhupāda was back in New York City to celebrate Rathayātrā, the temple’s first chariot parade. Reflecting on his Society’s global expansion in such a short time, Prabhupāda compared ISKCON to Varāhadeva, the Lord’s boar incarnation. As Lord Varāha had appeared from the nostril of Lord Brahmā and then quickly assumed a cosmic form, so ISKCON had appeared in a tiny storefront on New York’s Lower East Side and quickly covered the earth. It had done so because Prabhupāda had been utterly and absolutely surrendered to Kṛṣṇa’s plan, whose “movements,” or phases, he had been articulating since the 1940s.

Śrīla Prabhupāda conducts the wedding ceremony for three couples (Boston, 1969)

Phase One: Holy Names And Holy Books

In a 1950s *Back to Godhead* article highlighting the importance of absorption in sacred sound, Prabhupāda wrote: “Leaders and politicians may take lessons from the life of Mahatma Gandhi . . . in respect of his daily evening prayer meetings and regular recitation of Bhagwat Geeta. . . . [R]eciting the . . . Geeta makes one able to get rid of the demoniac way of life and gradually rising up to the plane of pure devotional life of the gods.” (*Back to Godhead,* 20 May 1956)

Launching ISKCON in 1966, Prabhupāda was the exemplar of ecstatic absorption. Brows knit, eyes slit in concentration, “Swamiji” led his first followers in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa for hours together – inside the storefront that first summer, then outside in nearby parks that fall. Those publicized outings were a historic marker in Prabhupāda’s public outreach, which he continued to expand globally through his followers.

Back at the storefront he would hold *Bhagavad-gītā* classes every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evening. Since Prabhupāda had not finished translating his *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is,* he used the version of a famous impersonalist whose commentary Prabhupāda exposed as misleading speculation. Not till late 1968 would his *As It Is* edition appear in ISKCON. Till then Prabhupāda was the main focus, the holy names and holy books issuing from one elderly holy person.

To impress upon his followers their responsibility to continue spreading Kṛṣṇa’s teachings after he was gone, Prabhupāda had them start an American edition of *Back to Godhead.* Rolling off old mimeograph machines at first, by the end of the decade BTG had become a colorful magazine, whose copies ISKCON devotees would offer people gathered round their street chanting parties. These were the infant days of the literature distribution that would become a hallmark of Prabhupāda’s movement.

Phase Two: Temples and Deities

In the above-mentioned 1956 BTG article, Prabhupāda cited Gandhi’s “temple entry movement” to show the crucial role temples play in a spiritual revolution. Though Gandhi was known as a “politician among saints,” Prabhupāda praised him for trying to restore the deity forms of Kṛṣṇa to temples desecrated by Hindu-Muslim violence. Unfortunately, he wrote, the temples have become “rendezvous of demoniac dance . . . so many plague spots for preaching atheism. . . .”[10] Hence his proposal to regenerate the temples as centers of spiritual education.

During ISKCON’s launch a decade later, as Prabhupāda’s raw recruits became practiced to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and hear *Bhagavad-gītā,* Kṛṣṇa deities often appeared first as devotional paintings in low-rent storefronts, then as imported images blessing onetime churches.

Surprisingly, “homemade” forms appeared right away in the first San Francisco temple, a storefront in the heart of America’s counterculture. Prabhupāda asked a skilled devotee to carve deities modeled after figurines spotted in an import store. Never mind that the carver’s wife had purloined them, or that the carver himself wasn’t yet following the disciplines of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Inclusive Prabhupāda was inviting everyone to appreciate the deity in His unusual form as Jagannātha, “the Lord of the Universe.” And where else but in psychedelic San Francisco would people so easily accept his invitation and bow before Jagannātha’s large, festive eyes. Under those watchful eyes, Prabhupāda was thus able to slip past the iconoclasts and introduce deity worship to Westerners.

Prabhupāda cited Gandhi’s “temple entry movement” to show the crucial role temples play in a spiritual revolution.

Phase Three: Initiation And Congregation

In a 1949 letter to Indian Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Sardar Patel, Prabhupāda wrote: “The third item is to take up the harijana movement. This movement is, in the real sense, a spiritual initiation movement and this should be organized in such a manner that people all over the world may take interest in it.”

The “harijana movement” was Gandhi’s attempt to allow everyone into the temples – not just the higher castes – by proclaiming everyone a *harijana,* “a person of God.” That’s true, Prabhupāda noted, but in order for everyone to become fit to associate with the Lord again, the *harijanas* must be initiated into a restorative process. As crude metal is said to transmute to gold in an alchemical process, so even a crude human being, by accepting initiation from a bona fide spiritual master, can gradually be restored to his original spiritual nature.[11]

Such initiated devotees would naturally become the core of a wider congregation whose history and development would vary from country to country.

When Prabhupāda brought his first Western disciples to India, for example, they were the talk of the nation. Why would materially successful Westerners give up everything to dance and sing Hare Kṛṣṇa in the streets? “You want to imitate Westerners,” Prabhupāda would chide his countrymen, “then imitate these Westerners. They are fed-up with so-called modern civilization.” Rather, “the material advancement of the Western countries and the spiritual assets of India should combine for the elevation of all human society.” (*Bhāg.* 4.25.13, Purport)

Concerned that Indians might come to see the Western devotees as mere performers, Prabhupāda temporarily suspended their street chanting and engaged them in a new program: Life Membership. For supporting ISKCON, members would receive whatever publications and accommodations the Society could offer them. Such respectable people became the first congregational members and invaluable allies in the struggle to establish Prabhupāda’s movement in India.

In the West, where the masses saw Kṛṣṇa consciousness as “foreign,” the congregation has taken more time to develop. Initially living and trained

inside temples, Prabhupāda's first Western followers have since spread out into the community, working and raising families, to become congregational members themselves. The Indian diaspora and the rise of yoga culture worldwide have also helped turn ISKCON into a congregational movement.

To carry the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement from the margin to the mainstream, Prabhupāda identified a fourth phase his committed followers need to approach.

Phase Four: Natural Life

In the same letter to Dr. Patel, Prabhupāda wrote: "The fourth item is to organize the much discussed caste system as a solution of natural division of the human beings all over the world. Nationalistic division of human races is artificial but scientific division of the caste system [by quality and work] as envisaged in the *Bhagavad-gita* is natural."

To show the world a better way to live and die, based on the *Gītā's* teachings, is the ultimate phase of Prabhupāda's mission. As the body's different parts are equally appreciated for their contribution to the whole body's welfare, so the social body's different classes should be equally valued for their role in serving the Supreme Lord. High or low, head to toe, inside we're all God's servants.

"When the Geeta Nagari will attempt to harmonise such sweet relation between man and God, man and the world and the world and God, at such an auspicious time only, the United Nations effort to establish peace in the world will be successful or the dream of a casteless society [of spiritual equality] all over the world will be realised in practice." ("The Conception of the Geeta Nagari," Part II, essay circa 1948)

Because living the way Kṛṣṇa lives amid His land and cows looks and feels very different from the way most of us live in the modern world, and because the first three phases of Prabhupāda's mission are perhaps more easily adaptable to modernity, we have been slow to approach Phase Four. Yet it is the timeless and natural spiritual life we and our modern world have been seeking and desperately need to recover.

NOTES

1. "The village of the *Bhagavad-gītā*"
2. First drafted after Gandhi's assassination, most of this essay later appeared in the May 20, 1956 issue of *Back to Godhead.*
3. Letter to Gandhi Memorial Fund, 5 July 1949.
4. Letter to Dr. Sardar Patel, Deputy Prime Minister of India, 28 February 1949.
5. *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta,* Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, Vol. 1, Chapter 7: Jhansi: The League of Devotees.
6. Bhaktivedanta Vedabase/Legal Documents/League of Devotees Prospectus, 16 May 1953.
7. Identified in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.29), "desire trees" yield limitless fruits to pure devotees, who have limitless desires to satisfy Lord Kṛṣṇa.
8. *Mārkine Bhāgavata-dharma,* "Teaching Kṛṣṇa Consciousness in America," Śrīla *Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta,* Vol. 2, Chapter 12: The Journey To America.
9. Bhaktivedanta Vedabase/Legal Documents/Certificate of Incorporation of ISKCON, July 13, 1966.
10. Prabhupāda is referring to impersonalist preachers who deny our personal relationship with the deity, thus encouraging gross sensualism and risky speculation about life's ultimate goal.
11. This is Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's analogy from his *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa.*

In the next issue: *With a better understanding of the conception and unfolding of our founder-*ācārya's *mission, we can now look closer at its unfulfilled phase,* varṇāśrama.

Sureśvara Dāsa joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in 1970. From 2011 to 2015, on behalf of a committee of the movement's Governing Body Commission called "Śrīla Prabhupāda's Position," he traveled the ISKCON world presenting the seminar series "Śrīla Prabhupāda, Our Founder-Ācārya."

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BOOK SECTION: ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Referred to as "the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature," *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa,* or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

KING PṚTHU AND THE GODDESS EARTH

Having heard of the future exploits of King Pṛthu, Vidura asks the sage Maitreya to elaborate.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 17

विदुर उवाच
3 कस्माद्दधार गोरूपं धरित्री बहुरूपिणी
यां दुदोह पृथुस्तत्र को वत्सो दोहनं च किम्

vidura uvāca
kasmād dadhāra go-rūpaṁ
dharitrī bahu-rūpiṇī
yāṁ dudoha pṛthus tatra
ko vatso dohanaṁ ca kim

viduraḥ uvāca – Vidura inquired; *kasmāt* – why; *dadhāra* – took; *go-rūpam* – the shape of a cow; *dharitrī* – the earth; *bahu-rūpiṇī* – who has many other forms; *yām* – whom; *dudoha* – milked; *pṛthuḥ* – King Pṛthu; *tatra* – there; *kaḥ* – who; *vatsaḥ* – the calf; *dohanam* – the milking pot; *ca* – also; *kim* – what.

Vidura inquired from the great sage Maitreya: My dear brāhmaṇa, since mother earth can appear in different shapes, why did she take the shape of a cow? And when King Pṛthu milked her, who became the calf, and what was the milking pot?

4 प्रकृत्या विषमा देवी कृता तेन समा कथम्
तस्य मेध्यं हयं देवः कस्य हेतोरपाहरत्

prakṛtyā viṣamā devī
kṛtā tena samā katham
tasya medhyaṁ hayaṁ devaḥ
kasya hetor apāharat

prakṛtyā – by nature; *viṣamā* – not level; *devī* – the earth; *kṛtā* – was made; *tena* – by him; *samā* – level; *katham* – how; *tasya* – his; *medhyam* – meant for offering in the sacrifice; *hayam* – horse; *devaḥ* – the demigod Indra; *kasya* – for what; *hetoḥ* – reason; *apāharat* – stole.

The surface of the earth is by nature low in some places and high in others. How did King Pṛthu level the surface of the earth, and why did the King of heaven, Indra, steal the horse meant for the sacrifice?

5 सनत्कुमाराद्भगवतो ब्रह्मन् ब्रह्मविदुत्तमात्
लब्ध्वा ज्ञानं सविज्ञानं राजर्षिः कां गतिं गतः

sanat-kumārād bhagavato
brahman brahma-vid-uttamāt
labdhvā jñānaṁ sa-vijñānaṁ
rājarṣiḥ kāṁ gatiṁ gataḥ

sanat-kumārāt – from Sanat-kumāra; *bhagavataḥ* – the most powerful; *brahman* – my dear *brāhmaṇa; brahma-vit-uttamāt* – well versed in the Vedic knowledge; *labdhvā* – after achieving; *jñānam* – knowledge; *sa-vijñānam* – for practical application; *rāja-ṛṣiḥ* – the great saintly King; *kām* – which; *gatim* – destination; *gataḥ* – achieved.

The great saintly King, Mahārāja Pṛthu, received knowledge from Sanat-kumāra, who was the greatest Vedic scholar. After receiving knowledge to be applied practically in his life, how did the saintly King attain his desired destination?

PURPORT: There are four Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas* (systems of disciplic succession). 1 One *sampradāya* comes from Lord Brahmā, one from the goddess of fortune, one from the Kumāras, headed by Sanat-kumāra, and one from Lord Śiva. These four systems of disciplic succession are still going on. As King Pṛthu has illustrated, one who is serious about receiving transcendental Vedic knowledge must accept a guru, or spiritual master, in one of these four disciplic successions. 2 It is said that unless one accepts a mantra from one of these *sampradāyas,* the so-called mantra will not act in Kali-yuga. Many *sampradāyas* have sprung up without authority, and they are misleading the people by giving unauthorized mantras. The rascals of these so-called *sampradāyas* do not observe the Vedic rules and regulations. Although they are addicted to all kinds of sinful activities, they still offer the people mantras and thus mislead them. Intelligent persons, however, know that such mantras will never be successful, and as such they never patronize such upstart spiritual groups. People should be very careful of these nonsensical *sampradāyas.* To get some facility for sense gratification, unfortunate people in this age receive mantras from these so-called *sampradāyas*. Pṛthu Mahārāja, however, showed by his example that one should receive knowledge from a bona fide *sampradāya*. Therefore Mahārāja Pṛthu accepted Sanat-kumāra as his spiritual master.

6 यच्चान्यदपि कृष्णस्य भवान् भगवतः प्रभोः श्रवः सुश्रवसः पुण्यं पूर्वदेहकथाश्रयम्

1) Who are the heads of the four Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas*?
2) Why must one accept a mantra from one of these four *sampradāyas*?
3) What is the meaning of *avatārī,* a name for Lord Kṛṣṇa?
4) Who are the *guṇa-avatāras*?
5) Of what qualities of Lord Kṛṣṇa is King Pṛthu an incarnation?
6) What is the meaning of the word *adhokṣaja*?

7 भक्ताय मेऽनुरक्ताय तव चाधोक्षजस्य च वक्तुमर्हसि योऽदुह्यद्वैन्यरूपेण गामिमाम्

yac cānyad api kṛṣṇasya
bhavān bhagavataḥ prabhoḥ
śravaḥ suśravasaḥ puṇyaṁ
pūrva-deha-kathāśrayam
bhaktāya me 'nuraktāya
tava cādhokṣajasya ca
vaktum arhasi yo 'duhyad
vainya-rūpeṇa gām imām

yat – which; *ca* – and; *anyat* – other; *api* – certainly; *kṛṣṇasya* – of Kṛṣṇa; *bhavān* – your good self; *bhagavataḥ* – of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *prabhoḥ* – powerful; *śravaḥ* – glorious activities; *su-śravasaḥ* – who is very pleasing to hear about; *puṇyam* – pious; *pūrva-deha* – of His previous incarnation; *kathā-āśrayam* – connected with the narration; *bhaktāya* – unto the devotee; *me* – to me; *anuraktāya* – very much attentive; *tava* – of you; *ca* – and; *adhokṣajasya* – of the Lord, who is known as Adhokṣaja; *ca* – also; *vaktum arhasi* – please narrate; *yaḥ* – one who; *aduhyat* – milked; *vainya-rūpeṇa* – in the form of the son of King Vena; *gām* – cow, earth; *imām* – this.

Pṛthu Mahārāja was a powerful incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's potencies; consequently any narration concerning his activities is surely very pleasing to hear, and it produces all good fortune. As far as I am concerned, I am always your devotee as well as a devotee of the Lord, who is known as Adhokṣaja. Please therefore narrate all the stories of King Pṛthu, who, in the form of the son of King Vena, milked the cow-shaped earth.

PURPORT: 3 Lord Kṛṣṇa is also known as *avatārī,* which means, "one from whom all the incarnations emanate." In *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.8) Lord Kṛṣṇa says, *ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate:* "I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me." Thus Lord Kṛṣṇa is the origin of everyone's appearance. As far as this material world is concerned, Lord Brahmā, Lord Viṣṇu, and Lord Śiva are all emanations from Kṛṣṇa. 4 These three incarnations of Kṛṣṇa are called *guṇa-avatāras.* The material world is governed by three material modes of nature, and Lord Viṣṇu, Lord Brahmā, and Lord Śiva respectively take charge of the modes of goodness, passion, and ignorance. 5 Mahārāja Pṛthu is also an incarnation of those qualities of Lord Kṛṣṇa by which one rules over conditioned souls.

6 In this verse the word *adhokṣaja,* meaning "beyond the perception of the material senses," is very significant. No one can perceive the Supreme Personality of Godhead by mental speculation; therefore a person with a poor fund of knowledge cannot understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Since one can form only an impersonal idea on the strength of one's material senses, the Lord is known as Adhokṣaja.

सूत उवाच 8 चोदितो विदुरेणैवं वासुदेवकथां प्रति प्रशस्य तं प्रीतमना मैत्रेयः प्रत्यभाषत

sūta uvāca
codito vidureṇaivaṁ
vāsudeva-kathāṁ prati
praśasya taṁ prīta-manā
maitreyaḥ pratyabhāṣata

sūtaḥ uvāca – Sūta Gosvāmī said; *coditaḥ* – inspired; *vidureṇa* – by Vidura; *evam* – thus; *vāsudeva* – of Lord Kṛṣṇa; *kathām* – narration; *prati* – about; *praśasya* – praising; *tam* – him; *prīta-manāḥ* – being very pleased; *maitreyaḥ* – the saint Maitreya; *pratyabhāṣata* – replied.

Sūta Gosvāmī continued: When Vidura became inspired to hear of the activities of Lord Kṛṣṇa in His various incarnations, Maitreya, also being inspired and being very pleased with Vidura, began to praise him. Then Maitreya spoke as follows.

PURPORT: Talk of *kṛṣṇa-kathā,* or topics about Lord Kṛṣṇa or His incarnations, is spiritually so inspiring that the reciter and hearer are never exhausted. That is the nature of spiritual talks. We have actually seen that one can never become satiated by hearing the conversations between Vidura and Maitreya. Both of them are devotees, and the more Vidura inquires, the more Maitreya is encouraged to speak. 7 A symptom of spiritual talks is that no one feels tired. Thus upon hearing the questions of Vidura, the great sage Maitreya did not feel disgusted but rather felt encouraged to speak at greater length.

मैत्रेय उवाच 9 यदाभिषिक्तः पृथुरङ्ग विप्रै- रामन्त्रितो जनतायाश्च पालः प्रजा निरन्ने क्षितिपृष्ठ एत्य क्षुत्क्षामदेहाः पतिमभ्यवोचत्

maitreya uvāca
yadābhiṣiktaḥ pṛthur aṅga viprair
āmantrito janatāyāś ca pālaḥ
prajā niranne kṣiti-pṛṣṭha etya
kṣut-kṣāma-dehāḥ patim abhyavocan

maitreyaḥ uvāca – the great sage Maitreya said; *yadā* – when; *abhiṣiktaḥ* – was enthroned; *pṛthuḥ* – King Pṛthu; *aṅga* – my dear Vidura; *vipraiḥ* – by the *brāhmaṇas; āmantritaḥ* – was declared; *janatāyāḥ* – of the people; *ca* – also; *pālaḥ* – the protector; *prajāḥ* – the citizens; *niranne* – being without food grains; *kṣiti-pṛṣṭhe* – the surface of the globe; *etya* – coming near; *kṣut* – by hunger; *kṣāma* – skinny; *dehāḥ* – their bodies; *patim* – to the protector; *abhyavocan* – they said.

The great sage Maitreya continued: My dear Vidura, at the time King Pṛthu was enthroned by the great sages and brāhmaṇas and declared to be the protector of the citizens, there was a scarcity of food grains. The citizens actually became skinny due to starvation. Therefore they came before the King and informed him of their real situation.

PURPORT: Information is given herein concerning the selection of the king by the *brāhmaṇas.* 8 According to the *varṇāśrama* system, the *brāhmaṇas* are considered to be the heads of the society and therefore to be situated in the topmost social position. The *varṇāśrama-dharma,* the institution of four *varṇas* and four *āśramas,* is very scientifically designed. 9 As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā, varṇāśrama-dharma* is not a man-made institution, but is God-made. In this narration it is clearly indicated that the *brāhmaṇas* used to control the royal power. When an evil king like Vena ruled, the *brāhmaṇas* would kill him through their brahminical powers and would select a proper ruler by testing his qualifications. In other words, the *brāhmaṇas,* the intelligent men or great sages, would control the monarchical powers.

Here we have an indication of how the *brāhmaṇas* elected King Pṛthu to the throne as the protector of the citizens. The citizens, being skinny due to hunger, approached the King and informed him that necessary action should be taken. The structure of the *varṇāśrama-dharma* was so nice that the *brāhmaṇas* would guide the head of state. The head of state would then give protection to the citizens. The *kṣatriyas* would take charge of protecting the people in general, and under the protection of the *kṣatriyas,* the *vaiśyas* would protect the cows, produce food grains and distribute them. *Śūdras,* the working class, would help the higher three classes by manual labor. This is the perfect social system.

10 वयं राजञ्जाठरेणाभितप्ता यथाग्निना कोटरस्थेन वृक्षाः

7) Why did Maitreya feel encouraged to continue speaking?
8) According to the *varṇāśrama* system, who are considered the heads of the society?
9) Who created the *varṇāśrama* system?

त्वामद्य याताः शरणं शरण्यं
यः साधितो वृत्तिकरः पतिर्नः
11 तन्नो भवानीहतु रातवेऽन्नं
क्षुधार्दितानां नरदेवदेव
यावन्न नङ्क्ष्यामह उज्झितोर्जा
वार्तापतिस्त्वं किल लोकपालः

vayaṁ rājaṣ jāṭhareṇābhitaptā
yathāgninā koṭara-sthena vṛkṣāḥ
tvām adya yātāḥ śaraṇaṁ śaraṇyaṁ
yaḥ sādhito vṛtti-karaḥ patir naḥ
tan no bhavān īhatu rātave 'nnaṁ
kṣudhārditānāṁ naradeva-deva
yāvan na naṅkṣyāmaha ujjhitorjā
vārtā-patis tvaṁ kila loka-pālaḥ

vayam – we; *rājan* – O King; *jāṭhareṇa* – by the fire of hunger; *abhitaptāḥ* – very much aggrieved; *yathā* – just as; *agninā* – by the fire; *koṭara-sthena* – in the hollow of a tree; *vṛkṣāḥ* – trees; *tvām* – unto you; *adya* – today; *yātāḥ* – we have come; *śaraṇam* – shelter; *śaraṇyam* – worth taking shelter of; *yaḥ* – who; *sādhitaḥ* – appointed; *vṛtti-karaḥ* – one who gives employment; *patiḥ* – master; *naḥ* – our; *tat* – therefore; *naḥ* – to us; *bhavān* – Your Majesty; *īhatu* – please try; *rātave* – to give; *annam* – food grains; *kṣudhā* – with hunger; *arditānām* – suffering; *nara-deva-deva* – O supreme master of all kings; *yāvat na* – lest; *naṅkṣyāmahe* – we will perish; *ujjhita* – being bereft of; *ūrjāḥ* – food grains; *vārtā* – of occupational engagements; *patiḥ* – bestower; *tvam* – you; *kila* – indeed; *loka-pālaḥ* – the protector of the citizens.

Dear King, just as a tree with a fire burning in the hollow of the trunk gradually dries up, we are drying up due to the fire of hunger in our stomachs. You are the protector of surrendered souls, and you have been appointed to give employment to us. Therefore we have all come to you for protection. You are not only a king, but the incarnation of God as well. Indeed, you are the king of all kings. You can give us all kinds of occupational engagements, for you are the master of our livelihood. Therefore, O king of all kings, please arrange to satisfy our hunger by the proper distribution of food grains. Please take care of us, lest we soon die for want of food.

10) Whose duty is it to see that all the *varṇas* are fully engaged in their respective occupational duties?

PURPORT: 10 It is the duty of the king to see that everyone in the social orders – *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya,* and *śūdra* – is fully employed in the state. Just as it is the duty of the *brāhmaṇas* to elect a proper king, it is the duty of the king to see that all the *varṇas* – *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya,* and *śūdra* – are fully engaged in their respective occupational duties. It is here indicated that although the people were allowed to perform their duties, they were still unemployed. Although they were not lazy, they still could not produce sufficient food to satisfy their hunger. When the people are perplexed in this way, they should approach the head of government, and the president or king should take immediate action to mitigate the distress of the people.

मैत्रेय उवाच
12 पृथुः प्रजानां करुणं निशम्य परिदेवितम्
दीर्घं दध्यौ कुरुश्रेष्ठ निमित्तं सोऽन्वपद्यत

maitreya uvāca
pṛthuḥ prajānāṁ karuṇaṁ
niśamya paridevitam
dīrghaṁ dadhyau kuruśreṣṭha
nimittaṁ so 'nvapadyata

maitreyaḥ uvāca – the great saint Maitreya said; *pṛthuḥ* – King Pṛthu; *prajānām* – of the citizens; *karuṇam* – pitiable condition; *niśamya* – hearing; *paridevitam* – lamentation; *dīrgham* – for a long time; *dadhyau* – contemplated; *kuru-śreṣṭha* – O Vidura; *nimittam* – the cause; *saḥ* – he; *anvapadyata* – found out.

After hearing this lamentation and seeing the pitiable condition of the citizens, King Pṛthu contemplated this matter for a long time to see if he could find out the underlying causes.

13 इति व्यवसितो बुद्ध्या प्रगृहीतशरासनः
सन्दधे विशिखं भूमेः क्रुद्धस्त्रिपुरहा यथा

iti vyavasito buddhyā
pragṛhīta-śarāsanaḥ
sandadhe viśikhaṁ bhūmeḥ
kruddhas tripura-hā yathā

iti – thus; *vyavasitaḥ* – having arrived at the conclusion; *buddhyā* – by intelligence; *pragṛhīta* – having taken up; *śarāsanaḥ* – the bow; *sandadhe* – fixed; *viśikham* – an arrow; *bhūmeḥ* – at the earth; *kruddhaḥ* – angry; *tri-pura-hā* – Lord Śiva; *yathā* – like.

[*Continued in the next issue.*]

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

Relief in Two Words

This conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and Dr. Christian Hauser, a psychiatrist, took place in Stockholm in September 1973.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I am prescribing, "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa." If you say, "Hare Kṛṣṇa," immediately the relief begins. And if you say, "No, no, I cannot chant this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra – I don't believe in it," what can be done? That will prove to be a great misfortune.

Just consider. Someone is being asked to chant two words: Hare Kṛṣṇa. But he'll not agree to chant these two words and get relief. Instead, he'll chant ten or fifteen words: "No, no, I cannot chant this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra – I don't believe in it." He won't chant the two words Hare Kṛṣṇa and get relief. That is a great misfortune for the person.

Dr. Hauser: Yes. But isn't there something else beyond just the chanting?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is the beginning. It is like an ocean. *Ānandāmbudhi*: an ocean of blissfulness. So first of all, come to the shore – touch the water. It is like the Pacific Ocean, with all its vastness. But come to the shore and touch the water. Then

gradually you'll understand. If you remain aloof – "No, I shall not touch it" – then how can you understand what the Pacific Ocean is?

Dr. Hauser: Yes, I can see that.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Ambudhi* means "the ocean"; *ānanda* means "blissfulness." So *ānandāmbudhi* means "the ocean of blissfulness." And *ānandāmbudhi-vardhanam:* this ocean of blissfulness goes on increasing and increasing unlimitedly.

Now, how does this ocean of blissfulness go on increasing? *Ceto-darpaṇa mārjanam:* the more you chant the Lord's holy names, the more you cleanse your heart.

We all have got these unclean ideas, these dirty illusions – "I am white," "I am black," "I am French," "I am Chinese" – covering our heart. Fundamentally, our illusion is "I am this body."

But by chanting the Lord's names, we cleanse away our illusion and come to the reality: "I am a spirit soul, part and parcel of the Supreme Spirit. Now let me serve Him."

So our diseased condition in this world is due to our unclean heart. In fact, disease means uncleanliness. So our material disease – our being in this material world to begin with – is due to our unclean heart. Therefore to cure this disease, *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam:* we have to cleanse our heart. And this is the process: chant Hare Kṛṣṇa; let the Lord's holy names cleanse our heart.

Dr. Hauser: When did this movement start in the Western hemisphere?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: My spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, asked me to revive this traditional Vedic culture in the Western world. It is not actually a question of "starting." This is the world's traditional, original culture.

Dr. Hauser: For some people, it will be very difficult accepting this kind of thing as authoritative.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Why? At every moment everyone is accepting something or other as authoritative – whether some scientific theory or some news report. And yet generally whatever thing we are accepting was produced by some man's imperfect senses and imperfect mind – so that thing is imperfect.

Dr. Hauser: Yes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But if we go to the all-perfect Supreme Personality of Godhead, then we get something perfect, something really authoritative. Take this traditional Vedic culture. It comes from the Vedic literature of Vyāsadeva, the Lord's literary incarnation. Just test for yourself. For instance, several thousand years ago the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* foretold Lord Buddha's birth – the place, the family, the date – exactly. Perfect authoritativeness. So this chanting of the Lord's names – we are not concocting some idea. In the Vedic literature the Lord recommends this; this is authoritative. But instead you may want to accept some other prescription for relief – something produced by some man's imperfect senses and mind. But that thing must be imperfect, because it is from someone imperfect. And yet, despite all this imperfection, still this man will put the thing forward as if it were perfect. So he is cheating.

That is going on. Recently a big professor, a Nobel Prize winner, went to Los Angeles to speak on his view of chemical evolution. His theory is that life begins from a certain four chemicals.

So one of my disciples who has a doctorate in chemistry asked this professor, "If I give you these four chemicals, will you be able to produce life?" The professor replied, "That I cannot say."

Remember, he had asserted that life begins from these four chemicals, and he had lectured for hours. And yet when he was asked, "When you actually have these four chemicals, will you be able to produce life?" he answered, "That I cannot say." Just see. He's not certain whether he'll be able to produce life. Is this not cheating?

Dr. Hauser: Yes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So we don't go to cheaters to get relief. We go to the Supreme Lord, and we continuously chant His holy names.

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*If you live outside the USA, check the estate tax laws for your country.

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare
PRONUNCIATION:
ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma (rhymes with "drama"). To hear Śrīla Prabhupāda chanting, go to krishna.com/hare-krishna-maha-mantra.

JUDGING Without Understanding

The Recipe for Ruining Relationships

The final stage of the relationship between Vāli and Sugrīva, important characters in the Rāmāyaṇa, *provide important ethical lessons.*

by Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa

A POIGNANT SUBPLOT in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is the fratricidal confrontation between the two monkey brothers Vāli and Sugrīva. In the *Mahābhārata,* fraternal animosity between the virtuous Pāṇḍavas and the evil Kauravas continues till the death of the Kauravas. In contrast, the *Rāmāyaṇa* features a deathbed reconciliation between the simian siblings that is as emotionally riveting as it is ethically illuminating. In the tradition, the pastimes of the Lord and His devotees are primarily celebrated and cherished for their spiritual potency – hearing them evokes divine emotions within us, purifies our heart of

The fight between Vāli and Sugrīva. Stone bas-relief at Banteay Srei, a Śiva temple in the Angkor area of Cambodia.

ungodly attachments, and redirects our desires from the world to Him. Additionally, the tradition sometimes sees in those pastimes ethical guidelines that can help us lead more harmonious lives during our stay in this world as we purify ourselves by practicing *bhakti.* Thus, for example, in the *Rāmāyaṇa,* Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata are seen as inspirations for fraternal selflessness, and Sītā is seen as an inspiration for wifely sacrifice. In this article I will focus on the ethical import of the denouement of the Vāli-Sugrīva relationship.

The Awesome Twosome

The story of these two brothers unfolded in Kishkinda, the kingdom of the Vānaras in southern India. The Vānaras were a race of celestial monkeys possessed of formidable strength and intelligence, with some monkey leaders having more sapient attributes than simian. Kishkinda's location was geopolitically significant, being situated strategically between the kingdom of humans in the north and the kingdom of the demons in the south. Throughout their childhood and youth, Vāli and Sugrīva were inseparable. Like the Pāṇḍavas, they both had dual sires: one earthly, one heavenly. Their earthly father was Ṛkṣarāja, the king of the Vānaras. And their heavenly fathers were Indra and Sūrya respectively, two of the most powerful gods. Just as Indra was higher in the cosmic hierarchy than Sūrya, Vāli, being older and stronger, was higher than Sugrīva. Just as Indra was given to bouts of arrogance and impetuosity, so was Vāli. Just as the two gods worked harmoniously in the cosmic administration, their two sons worked harmoniously in the administration of the monkey kingdom. When Ṛkṣarāja retired, Vāli ascended the throne of Kishkinda in accordance with the tradition of primogeniture. And Sugrīva became his faithful and resourceful assistant.

Once a fearsome demon named Māyāvī came to Kishkinda and challenged Vāli to a fight. The Vānara monarch sprang up from his throne and came out, followed closely by Sugrīva. If there was to be a fight, Vāli intended to engage in a fair one-to-one combat, but Sugrīva accompanied him for additional security in case the demon had any accomplices who might attack deviously. Not knowing the brothers' honorable intentions, Māyāvī shrank back in fear when he saw the awesome twosome charging towards him. Realizing that he was no match for their combined might, he turned around and fled.

Sugrīva waited, straining and praying to hear some sound of his brother, but the cave remained deathly silent.

Vāli, knowing that the demon would disrupt the peace in the neighborhood if he were not taught a lesson, decided to pursue him, and Sugrīva followed. Māyāvī, trying desperately to shake off the brothers, ducked into a mountain cave that led to a mazelike network of catacombs.

Vāli decided to pursue him in their dark cavernous hole and told Sugrīva to guard the entrance, lest the demon evade Vāli in the maze and try to escape. Sugrīva implored Vāli to let him join the dangerous subterranean search, but Vāli refused and instead repeated his instruction. After his brother vanished into the yawning darkness, Sugrīva waited for a long time, peering into the cave as far as the eye could see. He saw nothing and heard nothing till finally the cry of the demon resonated through the cave. Was it a cry of agony or of victory? Sugrīva waited, straining and praying to hear some sound of his brother, but the cave remained deathly silent. When the deafening silence went on and on, Sugrīva's heart sank as he inferred that his heroic brother had been killed.

Sugrīva felt torn between his desire to avenge his brother's death and his duty to protect their kingdom from the deadly demon. If Māyāvī came out of the cave, he might well be unstoppable. Sugrīva pondered: Would he be able to overpower a foe who had already overpowered his more powerful brother? Deciding that discretion was the better part of valor, Sugrīva devised an alternative strategy. He looked around till he spotted a giant boulder. Straining and sweating and panting, he moved that boulder till it sealed the cave. Feeling reassured that this would keep the demon at bay, Sugrīva returned to the kingdom. With a heavy heart, he informed the anxiously waiting courtiers about the demise of their valiant monarch and ordained a period of statewide mourning. After the mourning period ended, the ministers asked Sugrīva to take up the role of the king, pointing out the absence of any other qualified heir. Still afflicted by memories of Vāli, Sugrīva resolved to carry on his brother's legacy and accepted the royal mantle.

From Inseparable To Irreconcilable

A few days later, Vāli marched into the palace, his eyes blood-shot. After a long search in the cave, he had found the demon. Being intent on ending the tiresome threat, Vāli had wasted no energy in roaring while he slew the screaming demon. When he returned to the cave's entrance, he was vexed to find a huge boulder blocking it. He called out to Sugrīva, but got no response. Exhausted by the search and the fight, he couldn't move the boulder. Sugrīva's absence and the boulder's presence triggered in him a disconcerting suspicion: Might his trusted brother have connived to lock him in the cave?

Vāli needed several days to regain his strength and come up with a plan to move the boulder. The more he struggled, the more his suspicion grew. Surely the boulder was too big to have been moved by the wind or other natural forces. And even if somehow it had been moved naturally, surely it couldn't have so precisely closed the cave.

When Vāli finally forced his way out, he raced back to his kingdom, filled with doubts about his brother. When he saw Sugrīva seated on the throne, he felt his suspicion confirmed. Enraged, he pounced on Sugrīva, whose elation on seeing Vāli alive quickly gave way to dismay. Sugrīva tried to explain the situation, but Vāli was too furious to hear anything and simply pounded Sugrīva with his thunderous fists. Sugrīva was devastated to see the loathing in his beloved brother's eyes. The thought that his brother had not only suspected but also convicted him hurt Sugrīva more than the blows raining down upon him. Having no heart to fight back and hoping he might have a better chance to clarify things later when Vāli had cooled down, Sugrīva fled from the palace and the kingdom.

Seeing Sugrīva flee reinforced Vāli's conviction that his brother was guilty. Having thus judged Sugrīva as a traitor, Vāli's self-righteous mind goaded him to pursue and persecute his brother even in exile, lest he hatch another coup.

The hapless Sugrīva fled far and wide, but Vāli chased him relentlessly. Finally, Sugrīva found refuge right next to Kishkinda – in the Pampa lake area, near the hermitage of the sage Maṭaṅga. Once, in a power-intoxicated show of strength, Vāli had flung far away the carcass of Dundubhi, a demon he had killed. The blood from that carcass had fallen on Maṭaṅga's sacrificial arena, thus desecrating it. The angered sage, desiring to check Vāli's hubris, cursed the monkey to die if he ever entered the vicinity of the hermitage.

In the safe haven created by Maṭaṅga's curse, Sugrīva lived in an uneasy peace, always fearfully looking out for any assassins Vāli might send. As Vāli's hostility showed no sign of abating, Sugrīva gradually lost all hope of reconciliation. The two inseparable brothers had now become irreconcilable.

Attribution Error

Both Sugrīva and Vāli arrived at mistaken inferences – Sugrīva about Vāli's death and Vāli about Sugrīva's treachery. If we consider the information available to them, they had both made reasonable inferences. The difference between them was that Sugrīva had little opportunity to test his inference – the possibility of Māyāvī coming out was too hazardous. But Vāli had abundant opportunity to test his inference – being stronger, he could afford to give Sugrīva a hearing. Moreover, Sugrīva was no untrustworthy demon, but was his upright brother – and a brother who had served him faithfully as a right-hand man for many years. Sugriva, because of both his relationship and his track record, deserved a proper hearing before being judged. Unfortunately, Vāli was too sure of his reading of the situation and felt no need to seek any clarification.

Vāli succumbed to a common human error, which psychologists call an attribution error. When we see others behave in an inappropriate way, we tend to attribute that behavior to internal character flaws, not external extenuating circumstances. Thus, when we see others overeating, we judge them as gluttons. But when we ourselves overeat, we tend to be much more charitable in attri-

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bution: "I had not eaten for so long."

We succumb to attribution errors because of a dangerous combination of haste and overconfidence. When faced with the unexpected, we want to understand it quickly; and once we come to an understanding, we hold on to it, thinking, "I am so intelligent – how could I be wrong?"

But if we are truly intelligent, we will consider the possibility that we may be wrong. After all, the ways in which things happen in the world are complex. And even more complex are the ways in which people think. So determining what makes them behave in particular ways is not easy. Yet when we know something about others, we presume that we know enough to figure out their behavior – a presumption that often blinds us to our biases and blunders. Rather than falling prey to such presumptions and arriving at snap judgments, we can do better justice to our intelligence by giving others the benefit of doubt and open-mindedly hearing their side of the story.

Due to his haste and overconfidence, Vāli succumbed to judging Sugrīva without understanding – a surefire recipe for ruining relationships. And sure enough, their relationship soon lay ruined.

Rāma's Intervention – Martial and Verbal

Fast-forward several years: Rāma entered the scene and entered into an alliance with Sugrīva. As a part of their pact, he promised to correct the wrongs that Vāli had done to Sugrīva. At Rāma's behest, Sugrīva challenged Vāli to a fight. And when the two brothers were fighting, Rāma, after an initial failed attempt, shot Vāli with a lethal arrow.

We may question the morality of Rāma's action, as did Vāli himself while lying on the ground, mortally wounded. In reply, Rāma gave various reasons centered on the point that a sinful aggressor can be killed by any means. Vāli had committed multiple acts of aggression against his own brother: attacked with murderous intention, stripped him of all his wealth, and even taken Sugrīva's wife, Rumā, as his own wife. For an older brother to seize the wife of his younger brother was a grievous sin, almost akin to incest. Due to all this unwarranted aggression, Rāma declared that Vāli deserved nothing less than capital punishment.

The analysis of this reasoning can be an article in itself. For our present purpose, it should suffice that Vāli found the reasoning convincing. If the plaintiff in a case of perceived injustice pronounces after due discussion and deliberation that no injustice was done, we too can accept that pronouncement – after all, the plaintiff knows more and feels more than us.

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After making his case, Rāma deferred the judgment to Vāli: "If you think I have acted wrongly, I will withdraw the arrow and restore your life and strength right now."

Vāli, his hubris destroyed doubly by Rāma's arrow piercing his chest and Rāma's arrowlike words piercing his presumptions, pondered his actions and recognized their wrongness. He humbly replied that despite his many misdeeds, he had been causelessly blessed to get the priceless opportunity of dying in the auspicious presence of Rāma – an opportunity he didn't want to pass over just for a longer life. He further confessed that for long he too had felt he might have wronged Sugrīva, but his pride hadn't allowed him to consider that feeling.

Deathbed Reconciliation

With his last few breaths, Vāli solaced his sobbing wife, Tārā, and his grieving son, Aṅgada. He asked them to hold no grudges towards Sugrīva, but to live peaceably under his shelter. Then he turned towards Sugrīva, requesting him to bear no malice towards Tārā and Aṅgada, but instead care for them.

Seeking forgiveness from his brother and wanting to make amends, Vāli took out the jeweled necklace that Indra had given him. That celestial necklace came with the blessing of protecting the life of its wearer. In fact, it was this necklace that had kept Vāli alive for so long even after being mortally wounded by Rāma's arrow. What father wouldn't desire such armor for his son? Just as Indra had given the necklace to his son, Vāli too would have been entirely justified in giving it to his son. But he gave it to Sugrīva, thus expressing through his actions the deep remorse he had not the energy or the time to express in words. As soon as the necklace slipped out from Vāli's hands, his soul slipped out of his body.

Having heard his brother's heart-wrenching words and seeing him fall back, motionless and silent, Sugrīva broke down. This was the elder brother he had known and loved and missed for so long – and would now miss forever. Being overwhelmed with regret for having instigated the killing of such a brother, Sugrīva censured himself and resolved to atone for his sin of fratricide by ending his life with that of his brother.

Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa consoled Sugrīva with gentle words, reminding him of his duty to his family and his citizens. Sugrīva pulled himself together, ordered the grieving monkeys to arrange for a royal funeral for their deceased king, and began a second period of mourning for his brother.

Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa consoled Sugrīva with gentle words, reminding him of his duty to his family and his citizens.

AAA: Three Steps To Reconciliation

The story of Sugrīva and Vāli defies simplistic contours of good versus evil. Both brothers were virtuous, but they were ripped apart for life due to one unfortunate misjudgment by the more powerful, more impetuous sibling. What could have been a happy story of fraternal affection became, due to one unclarified misunderstanding, an unhappy story of fraternal animosity that ended in heartbreaking fratricide. Thankfully, their unhappiness was reduced by Rāma's intervention, which brought about a pre-mortem reconciliation.

We too can reduce the unhappiness in our relationships by internalizing the critical lesson from this story – never judge without understanding. And if we have already judged others without understanding them, we can seek reconciliation, as did Vāli. We can tread the path to reconciliation using three A's: Acknowledge, Apologize, Amend.

1. Acknowledge: In our relationships that have gone sour, we can honestly introspect and humbly hear from others to check if we might have been more at error than we have believed. If we come to know of our error, we need to acknowledge it, as did Vāli after hearing from Rāma.

2. Apologize: Just as arrogant words of judgment can hurt, humble words of rapprochement can heal. We can take huge steps in rebuilding relationships by apologizing like Vāli for the wrongs we have done, knowingly or unknowingly.

3. Amend: Actions speak louder than words, Just as Vāli gave his necklace to Sugrīva, we can do whatever is best possible under the circumstances to correct, or at least mitigate, the consequences of our misjudgment.

Vāli required the jolting arrival of death to put aside his pride and make up for his misjudgment. If we meditate on his story and learn from it, we can make up long before such an extreme jolt.

Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa, a disciple of His Holiness Rādhānāth Swami, holds a degree in electronic and telecommunications engineering and serves full time at ISKCON Mumbai. He is a BTG associate editor and the author of sixteen books. To read his other articles or to receive his daily reflection on the Bhagavad-gītā, *"Gita-Daily," visit thespiritualscientist.com. This article was adapted from his upcoming book* From to We – Reflections on Ramayana.

The 40-Year History of ISKCON Padayātrā

In our high-tech world, a time-honored low-tech tradition still proves to be an effective way to spread Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings.

by Gaurāṅgī Devī Dāsī

Yamarāja Dāsa

FOR THOUSANDS of years, people in India have performed *padayātrās* ("walking festivals") to tour holy places and spread spiritual teachings. Like many great spiritual teachers before Him, Lord Caitanya went on *padayātrā.* For almost six years He walked throughout India to spread the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and establish the superiority of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti.* In 1953, Śrīla Prabhupāda, the Lord's own *senapati-bhakta* ("commander-

Lokanāth Swami (driving the oxcart) grew up in a village in India and has been with Padayātrā since 1976, serving as ISKCON's Worldwide Padayātrā minister since 1991. Above, Padayātrā India enters a village in Orissa in 1985.

Padayātrā India: The Inaugurator Of ISKCON's Parikramās in Vrindavan and Mayapur

AT THE END of January 1987, the Padayātrā India party arrived in Vrindavan, ready for Gaura Pūrṇimā (Lord Caitanya's Appearance Day festival). Since 1974, devotees had taken buses to the local holy sites during ISKCON's two large annual festivals in Mayapur and Vrindavan, but these outings couldn't compare to systematically walking to every corner of these holy places. So, on February 13 Padayātrā India inaugurated ISKCON's Vraja-maṇḍala-parikramā. Two hundred devotees absorbed themselves in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa for twenty-five days as they walked together throughout the greater Vrindavan area. The following year the same team organized the second Vraja-maṇḍala-parikramā, during the autumn month of Kārttika. Eighty devotees from twenty countries walked the entire route, and gained the conviction that their home is not America, Japan, or England, but the eternal land of Kṛṣṇa.

In January 1990, Padayātrā India arrived in Mayapur after its second tour of India. At the request of the Mayapur Festival Committee chairman, Jayapatāka Swami, the Padayātrā India devotees organized the

Śrī Śrī Nitāi-Gaurasundara, the current Padayātrā India deities

first ISKCON Navadvīpa–maṇḍala parikramā, with the *padayātrā* deities. The small group of *padayātrīs,* led by Jaya Vijaya Dāsa, worked with local devotees to organize the tour and arrange accommodations, cooking facilities, *kīrtana* leaders, and inspiring speakers. For nine days, 170 devotees from 29 nations blissfully walked the nine islands of Lord Caitanya's land while chanting the *mahā-mantra* and "*Jaya Śacīnandana! Jaya Śacīnandana!*"

During the years leading up to the Śrīla Prabhupāda Centennial, both *parikramās* became the biggest international reunions of Prabhupāda's disciples and followers. Besides their aspect as pilgrimages, the *parikramās* were also excellent for fostering unity, blissful devotee relationships, and the ecstasy of congregational chanting. With the Navadvīpa-parikramā becoming more and more popular, in 1990 ISKCON's Governing Body Commission passed a resolution making it a yearly event. The number of participants kept increasing year after year, and in 1993 Lokanāth Swami and Padayātrā India handed the entire responsibility for the walk to the ISKCON Mayapur management, headed by Jayapatāka Swami and Bhakti Puruṣottama Swami. For the 2015 *parikramā,* there were ten thousand devotees from about sixty countries, making up six groups: the international group for English-speaking devotees, the Russian group, the Hindi group, and three Bengali groups.

Lokanāth Swami remains the chairman of ISKCON's Vraja-maṇḍala-parikramā. Bhadra Dāsa retired after nineteen years as co-manager with Rādhā-Ramaṇa Swami. The current members of the executive committee include such loyal *padayātrīs* as Rādhā-Ramaṇa Swami, Muralī-mohana Dāsa, Iṣṭadeva Dāsa, and Varāha Rūpa Dāsī. ISKCON Jhansi temple president Vraja-bhūmi Dāsa, who has been active in *parikramā* organization for about twelve years, is now one of its chief coordinators, its treasurer, and its main fundraiser. Vraja-maṇḍala-parikramā has changed tremendously over the years, going from eighty devotees in 1987 to around two thousand in 2014. Initially there were mostly Westerners. Gradually the Indian temples and their large congregations started taking part, later joined by Russian-speaking devotees. Many improvements have been made in the past ten years: expert *kīrtana* leaders from Mayapur, free bottled water, a daily shuttle to and from the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple, portable toilets, and a skilled kitchen crew of Mayapur devotees, headed by Rādhādyuti Dāsa, a Padayātrā India cook for many years. The year 2015 marked the five hundredth anniversary of Lord Caitanya's visit to Vraja-maṇḍala, and in 2016 ISKCON will celebrate its thirtieth Vraja-maṇḍala-parikramā.

Yamarāja Dāsa

Orissa, 1985 (left and below). This was part of the Padayātrā commemorating the five hundredth anniversary of the appearance of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. It started in Dwarka, Gujarat, and ended in Mayapur, West Bengal, covering 4,400 miles in eighteen months.

in-chief devotee"), used *padayātrā* to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh. His regular *saṅkīrtana* party around the city would attract up to fifty followers. And once, with his first disciple, Acharya Prabhakar, he went on *padayātrā* to Chirgaon, a small town about 30 km north of Jhansi.

1976: Śrīla Prabhupāda Inspires Oxcart Padayātrās in India

As early as 1969 Śrīla Prabhupāda had advised his disciples staying with him at John Lennon's estate outside London to use the land offered by John to grow fruits and vegetables and then transport them by oxcart to sell in the city. He spoke a similar message to a guest in Mauritius during a morning walk: "What is the use of a car? If you can get everything locally – basic necessities – then where is the need of a car? If you acquire a cart, you can have an oxcart. That's all. Why should you hanker after petrol, oil, machine, this, that – so many things? Why?"

His instructions on conducting oxcart *padayātrā* to bring Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the villages of India resulted in two long *padayātrās* in 1976. He appointed Lokanāth Swami, an Indian disciple who grew up in a village, the leader of the group walking from Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh, to Mayapur, West Bengal. Their most important programs took place in the evening in halls, temples, and courtyards, and on farms. Because entertainment and public events were rare in the countryside, entire villages would attend the programs, which consisted of an *ārati* ceremony for the traveling deities (Śrī Śrī Nitāi-Gaurasundara [Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu]), a long *kīrtana,* a philosophical talk, and *prasāda.* The biggest attraction may have been the few Western devotees, since at that time most of the villagers had never seen a foreigner. The main reward for Lokanāth Swami was seeing Śrīla Prabhupāda's beaming smile when they reached the Allahabad Kumbha-melā and his overwhelmingly loving reception when they arrived in Mayapur.

1984–1986: Celebrating Lord Caitanya's Five-Hundredth Anniversary

ISKCON's first grand-scale *padayātrā,* led by Lokanāth Swami, was a phenomenal success. Some of the highlights: an elephant, several oxcarts, a camel cart, tent programs attended by thousands, *kīrtana* groups of 50 to 200 devotees from different nations, a large advance party with up to seven vehicles, book distributors joined by busloads of local devotees, amazing receptions, Food for Life *prasāda* distribution almost every day, dioramas and exhibits, numerous favorable articles in nationwide newspapers, meetings with officials, VIPs, politicians and religious leaders, visits to many places of pilgrimage, and about twenty thousand people viewing Śrī Śrī Nitāi-Gaurasundara daily.

Yamarāja Dāsa

Yamarāja Dāsa

Avadhūta Śiromaṇi Dāsa and Candrabhāga Devī Dāsī, a husband-and-wife team (left), trekked more than five thousand miles in North, Central, and South America from 2003 to 2006. Devotees in Italy (below and bottom) join the annual eighteen-mile Walk for Peace from Perugia to Assisi, made famous by St. Francis and now known as the City of Peace.

Padayātrā had revealed itself as a truly grassroots movement for spreading Lord Caitanya's message. It was just too good to stop in Mayapur.

1986–1996: The Worldwide Padayātrā Explosion Leading Up to Śrīla Prabhupāda's Centennial Year

After its initial successes, Padayātrā India continued in a more humble way. The highlights of this decade were the inauguration of ISKCON's annual Vraja-maṇḍala-parikramā and Navadvīpa-maṇḍala-parikramā (tours of Vrindavan and Mayapur), the trek to Badarikashrama in the Himalayas, and the erection of the Padayātrā Gate in Dwarka. Devotees also organized walks in Orissa, West Bengal, and Maharashtra. In 1991 Lokanāth Swami, now ISKCON's Padayātrā Worldwide minister, started to plan for *padayātrās* in a hundred countries as his Centennial offering to Śrīla Prabhupāda. The first walks were in Mauritius, Guyana, the USA, Mexico, and Ireland. Padayātrā was emerging slowly but definitely as an effective tool for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and it gradually gained support from ISKCON leaders and members. Another reason for the *padayātrā* explosion was that organizers learned how to adapt the program to their own countries – using horses instead of oxen, or using no animals at all, driving through uninhabited areas, and using boats or planes to get from island to island, as in the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean.

Several *padayātrā* teams became permanent traveling parties, including Padayātrā America, which continued on to Central America, and Padayātrā Europe. *Padayātrā* enthusiasts emerged. Paraśurāma Dāsa organized walks in more than thirty countries, and in 1992 started his Vraja-maṇḍala oxcart *padayātrā.* Bhaktimārga Swami walked alone across Canada. And Jaya Vijaya Dāsa led Padayātrā India for ten years. Śrīla Prabhupāda's Centennial Celebration in 1996 culminated in a series of special events, including Global Padayātrā Week. By the end of 1996, *padayātrās* had taken place on four continents, in 105 countries, including communist countries (Cuba) and Muslim countries (Malaysia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan).

Padayātrā Is Here to Stay

Padayātrās have proved to be an excellent tool to unite, reunite, inspire, and rejuvenate devotees. All the elements for rapid spiritual advancement are magically concentrated around the *padayātrā* traveling temple: constantly chanting the holy names, associating with sincere and advanced devotees, hearing and talking about Gaura-Nitāi and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, living intimately with the deities, distributing

Some Words From Śrīla Prabhupāda About Padayātrā

"And oxen can be used for driving carts and preaching village to village. What is the question of killing them? Here in India our Lokanāth Mahārāja has successfully organized such a program, and it is a great success. He has traveled all over India, and everywhere they distribute books, *prasādam,* and perform *kīrtana,* village to village. Each night they stop at a different village. We can introduce many millions of such carts all over the world."

(March 16, 1977, Letter to Nityānanda Dāsa, head of the New Talavan farm community in the USA)

"If some young men like you would join me, then along with some foreign disciples I can immediately take up this program and tour village to village and town to town. It will be very, very effective. I know that."

(April 16, 1976, Prabhupāda's reply to Punjabi Premananda, a young Indian man interested in *padayātrā*)

"I am also happy to hear your very nice activities. I wish I could have joined you. I like your program very much. If you continue this program, you will be benefited, people will be benefited, and everyone will be happy."

(September 1976, Prabhupāda's reply to Lokanāth Swami's first *padayātrā* report)

books and serving in many other ways, sharing Kṛṣṇa consciousness with the public, experiencing exciting adventures, taking part in many cultural festivals, subsisting on healthy and abundant *prasāda,* and – most important – receiving the blessings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi.

In 1996 there were still about 123 countries through which *padayātrā* had never walked, and even in the countries devotees had visited they had passed through only a small number of places. Lokanāth Swami believed that as long as Padayātrā India stayed on the road, the expansion of *padayātrā* worldwide would continue. And Padayātrā India has kept going. The participants have changed, but one constant has remained – book distribution, by which the party has become self-sufficient.

The 1996 Padayātrā in Nairobi, Kenya (top), was led by Paraśurāma Dāsa from England. At right, a South African devotee reads the Padayatra Worldwide *magazine during a* padayātrā *in that country. At far right, a passerby offers respects to the* padayātrā *deities in Slovenia.*

Padayātrā India has been on the road since 1984 and is now in Andhra Pradesh on its sixth tour of the country.

Besides *padayātrā's* public appeal, its tremendous success in the media, and its spiritual rewards for ISKCON's devotees, there were other reasons to keep *padayātrā* alive. For example, with its emphasis on ox-power, it is an integral part of Vaiṣṇava culture. Śrīla Prabhupāda often warned us that modern civilization can be finished at any moment. If the oil runs out or the transportation industry fails for any reason, Kṛṣṇa's devotees will be ready to rely on their God-given feet and the oxen, to continue bringing the holy names to every town and village. Bhakti Rāghava Swami, minister of the ISKCON Daiva Varṇāśrama Ministry in India, foresees the day when every state

Bhaktimārga Swami, the Walking Monk

SINCE 1996, Bhaktimārga Swami, a *sannyāsī* in his early sixties, has walked 30,964 km (19,240 mi.), mainly in his native Canada (four crossings), and also in Ireland, Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad, Israel, and Mauritius.

"I'll walk till I drop," he has said.

In September 2015 he started walking from Boston to Butler, Pennsylvania, and from there to New York City, retracing Śrīla Prabhupāda's historic journey fifty years ago when he started the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. In 2016, to celebrate ISKCON's

fiftieth anniversary, he plans to walk from New York to San Francisco, the location of the second ISKCON temple.

Although he walks alone, he has help from friends who precede him in a support vehicle, arranging accommodations and *prasāda,* gathering supplies, contacting media and libraries, coordinating speaking engagements at institutes or in people's homes, distributing *Bhagavad-gītās,* and occasionally placing them in prisons, hospitals, and school libraries. They also check on him every few hours. He doesn't carry a backpack with a raincoat or a sweater – just his *japa* beads, a few brochures stuffed in a pocket, and recently a cell phone/camera.

We can best appreciate the impact of his simple walking, and his unique friendly style of reaching out to people, by what has been written and said about him in books and newspaper reports – all of which became more and more abundant and personal when he did his later walks across Canada. The headlines of numerous newspaper articles, usually accompanied by a photograph, all captured Bhaktimārga Swami's compassion and the spirit of his walks: spiritual healing; getting people to slow down; promoting a culture of walking, which encourages self-discovery and introspection; and reducing the excessive use of machines, especially cars, which he calls "big, shiny coffins." The articles offer many details about Bhaktimārga Swami's life, the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, and its philosophy. Several reporters have written about how meeting him benefited their own life. He has been interviewed by numerous media outlets, including the largest broadcaster in Canada, the CBC. He appeared eighteen times in *The Longest Road,* a television documentary on the Trans-Canada Highway released in 2002 by the National Film Board of Canada.

"What's unique about this walking project," he says, "is that in each town or city you come to, you create a kind of sensation. There's a ripple effect, an ongoing buzz at each place I go. It's not like a splash when you do one festival, for example. Every time you go to a new city or town, you're a sensation. And you get recognized – 'There's a monk around town.' Walking across Canada is quite amazing – an amazing feat – and people get a little bit excited about it.

"The public swoons at bad news, but this is different. It has its human-interest value, a sportsman's spin. It's positive. The third time I walked through the nation's capital, Ottawa, the media went wild on all levels – television, newspaper, and radio – and then, of course, there was the public itself taking notice, honking horns, stopping, getting my signature, shaking my hand. On average, each day thousands of people read or heard Kṛṣṇa's name.

"For me, walking is almost like an obsession. Lord Kṛṣṇa created us with half of our body made up of legs, so I believe in using them for Him. I find there's no better or more personal way to meet people than with the low-tech, highly organic approach of using your legs. The legs were made for walking and the mouth for speaking about the Absolute. What a perfect combination!"

Padayātrā Fiji, 1995 (right). Below: the crew of the 2011 Netherlands Padayātrā, held in the southern part of the country for a few days in the summer. At bottom, Padayātrā New Zealand sometimes consists of one man, one horse, one cart – and Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi. Yaśodā Dulāla Dāsa has walked solo or led others on walks since 1991.

in India will have its own permanent oxcart *padayātrā.* Already one small party headed by Viṣṇusvāmī Dāsa has been traveling nonstop in Andhra Pradesh since December 2012.

Innovations, Continuation, And the Emergence of Padayātrā as an Annual Function

After 1996 the *padayātrā* fever generated at the time of the Centennial kept burning strong. Many countries organized new walks: Hungary, Italy, Russia, Netherlands, Brazil, Argentina, England, Philippines, South Africa, and New Zealand. *Padayātrā* was taken to two new countries, Madagascar and Taiwan, and it became an annual function in the Czech Republic, Guyana, Mauritius, Orissa, and Slovenia. Avadhūta Śiromaṇi Dāsa and his wife, Candrabhāga Dāsī, walked with a horse-drawn cart from Pennsylvania in North America to Ecuador in South America.

ISKCON devotees kept innovating. One successful innovation was to take part in existing walking pilgrimages, such as the Walk for Peace to Assisi in Italy, the St. James Way in Spain, and the Diṇḍi-yātrās in Maharashtra, India. This reduced the

Fifty Padayātrās for ISKCON's Fiftieth Anniversary

IN 2014 THE Padayātrā Worldwide Ministry started to work on its offering of fifty *padayātrās* by the end of 2016, in honor of ISKCON's Golden Jubilee. So far, twenty-two *padayātrās* have taken place, and eight are planned, leaving twenty to reach the goal. *Padayātrā* perfectly fits the key public message chosen for ISKCON's fiftieth anniversary – "The Joy of Devotion." The public cannot help but notice the blissful faces of the *padayātrīs* chanting, dancing, and serving together as they walk from town to town and village to village.

If your temple or group would like to help the Padayātrā Worldwide Ministry reach the goal of fifty *padayātrās* this year, visit www.padayatra.com.

ISKCON Padayātrā travels through Jaysingpur, Maharashtra (above), during one of that state's four annual Diṇḍi-yātrās, attended by thousands of pilgrims. At left, Padayātrā draws a crowd of worshipers in an Indian city. Above right, Paraśurāma Dāsa and a small group of padayātrīs *pass through a village in Vraja, the greater Vrindavan area. At right: devotees en route from Kamyavan to (Vraja's) Badrinath during ISKCON's Vraja-maṇḍala-parikramā.*

devotees' organizational work and increased the opportunity to share the *mahā-mantra* and Lord Caitanya's message with a huge number of souls.

For the past eighteen years, ISKCON devotees have been walking with other pilgrims during the four main annual Diṇḍi-yātrās, which the devotees of Lord Viṭṭhala (the Kṛṣṇa deity worshiped in Pandharpur and throughout Maharashtra) have been doing for more than seven centuries, singing devotional songs and chanting the Lord's names along the way. At the beginning of July, around 140 devotees from ISKCON Pune join the largest Diṇḍi-yātrā, the 18-day Tukārāma (or Dehu) Diṇḍi, walking the 200 km from Dehu (Tukārāma's birthplace) to Pandharpur via Pune. More than 300,000 pilgrims take part in this Diṇḍi every year, and up to 1.5 million people gather in Pandharpur on each of the four main Ekadāśīs for bathing in the holy Chandrabhaga River and viewing Lord Viṭṭhala for a few seconds. Other ISKCON centers in Maharashtra – Aravade, Solapur, and Beed – have taken the responsibility to organize an annual Diṇḍi of their own.

Walking: A Fast-Growing Trend of the Past Decade

Numerous articles show that walking is one of today's fastest-growing trends. More and more people walk to work for their health. Some go on organized walking tours during their vacations. There's even a revival of walking pilgrimages among Christians. In 2013 alone 215,880 people walked the St. James Way through France and Spain for spiritual growth, introspection, and rejuvenation. So why not walk with and for Lord Caitanya and Śrīla Prabhupāda? Our founder-*ācārya* once said that with Lord Caitanya's appearance the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement would become prominent for ten thousand years – the Golden Age within Kali-yuga. *Padayātrā* is at the heart of that

Padayātrā Miles Traveled

1976 to August 2015

- INDIA: 168,300 km (104,577 mi., 4.2 x Earth's circumference)
- EUROPE: 32,491 km (20,189 mi.)
- NORTH, CENTRAL, AND SOUTH AMERICA: 47,514 km (29,524 mi.)
- ASIA, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, AFRICA, ISLANDS, ETC.: 10,300 km (6,400 mi.)
- **GRAND TOTAL:** 258,605 km (160,690 mi., almost 6.5 x Earth's circumference)

The Longest Padayātrās

COUNTRIES / CONTINENTS	DETAILS	PERIOD	LEADERS	DISTANCE
India	Now on its sixth tour of India	March 1986 to August 2015	Jaya Vijaya Dāsa, Sanaka-Sanātana Dāsa, Iṣṭadeva Dāsa, Rūpa Gosvāmī Dāsa, Ācārya Dāsa	78,000 km (48,467 mi.)
North, Central, and South America	Gita Nagari in Pennsylvania to Ecuador	May 2003 to May 2006	Avadhūta Śiromaṇi Dāsa, Candrabhāga Devī Dāsī	8,500 km (5,282 mi.)
Europe	Belfast to Moscow via 26 other countries	May 1990 to the end of 1996 (during summers, as an offering for Śrīla Prabhupāda's Centennial)	Ekanātha Dāsa (Spain to Russia)	7,500 km (4,660 mi.)
India	Dwarka to Mayapur via South India	September 1984 to March 1986 (to celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of Lord Caitanya's appearance)	Lokanāth Swami MANAGERS: Havirdhāna Dāsa, Jayādvaita Swami, Bhadra Dāsa	7,000 km (4,350 mi.)
USA and Central America	Boston to Miami to Panama	June 1990 to January 1993	Śaunaka Dāsa, Kṛṣṇa Vilāsinī Devī Dāsī	3,814 km (2,370 mi.)

prediction, and our ecology-friendly oxcart *padayātrā* is now more relevant than ever. Our planet is becoming more and more uninhabitable, with its increased pollution, climate changes, and natural disasters. While spreading the holy names and knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, *padayātrīs* can teach cow protection, ox-power, and respect for Mother Earth.

Lord Caitanya keeps inspiring ISKCON Vaiṣṇavas to spread the holy names more and more, sometimes in conjunction with *padayātrā,* as is done in Mauritius during the annual World Holy Name Week. We pray that more temples will follow in the footsteps of these devotees and that a new *padayātrā* explosion will take place in the world to celebrate ISKCON's fiftieth birthday. Padayātrā is an easy, joyful way to distribute the tasty fruits of love of God and thus relieve the Lord of the anxiety He feels for the suffering souls of this world.

Gaurāṅgi Devī Dāsī has been coordinator for the Padayātrā Worldwide Ministry since 2012. After serving for five years in the Padayātrā office in Delhi, she continued assisting the ministry by writing articles for the Padayātrā newsletter and compiling the Padayātrā manual. She's now producing the newsletter, coordinating the website, and editing two books on padayātrā. *Email: gaurangi.lok@gmail.com.*

The map above shows countries where ISKCON Padayātrās have taken place. At right, Gaurāṅgī Devī Dāsī, the author of this article, is the coordinator for the Padayātrā Worldwide Ministry.

Painting by Radhe Gendron

"Do Not Fear"

Wholeheartedly surrendering to Kṛṣṇa, as the Bhagavad-gītā *urges us, is the guaranteed way to fearlessness.*

by Puruṣottama Nitāi Dāsa

I WAS SITTING IN the college library one afternoon when suddenly my friend and classmate Abhishek ran frantically into the building, breathless and perspiring. In apparent desperation, he approached one of our teachers and asked, "What if I fail my HSC board exam?* How will I face my friends and relatives?" The teacher patiently calmed him down, advising him to stay positive instead of getting so agitated by something that had not yet happened.

But Abhishek could not settle down. I knew him as a studious young man, hard working and conscientious. But peer and social pressures had taken their toll on him, and everything in his life seemed to frighten him. Even a mosquito could drive him crazy with fear. "What if I get malaria and die?" When the results came out after two months, Abhishek found that he had cleared his exam with distinction.

The uncertainty of the future keeps many of us in a perpetual state of fear. The world is so unpredictable we don't know what is going to happen in the next moment. A health crisis, financial collapse, joblessness, death in the family – anything can happen at any time. Most of us worry about things that have never happened to us and will never happen to us. Fear is like a noose that gets tighter and tighter until it strangles one to death.

The fifth-century Indian philosopher, poet, and grammarian Bhartṛhari explains that there are nine types of fear:

bhoge roga-bhayaṁ kule cyutibhayaṁ vitte nṛpālad bhayaṁ
māne dainya-bhayaṁ bale ripubhayaṁ rūpe jarāyā bhayam
śāstre vādi-bhayaṁ guṇe khalabhayaṁ kāye kṛtāntād bhayaṁ
sarvaṁ vastu bhayānvitaṁ bhuvi nṛṇāṁ vairāgyam evābhayam

In enjoyment there is fear of disease;
In a family there is fear of disgrace;
In wealth there is fear of hostile rulers;
In honor there is fear of humiliation;
In knowledge there is fear of opponents;
In beauty there is fear of old age;
In power there is fear of backbiters;
In virtue there is fear of jealousy;
In body there is fear of death;
All the things of this world pertaining to man are attended by fear;
Renunciation alone stands for fearlessness.
(*Vairāgya-śatakam* 31)

Death is the most frightening thing in this list because what happens after death is a mystery to most. And because we fear death more than anything else, we either ignore or downplay it. Masking the reality of death under a thick coating of perfumes and cosmetics, we feel secure in the illusory hope that we are

*HSC (Higher Secondary Examination) is a centralized examination for class 12 students in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal.

still young and death is too far in the future to be of a present concern. The apparent success of medical science has added to this illusion by falsely increasing the hope that one day we will conquer death. Unfortunately, no technological advancement can stop death. The eventuality of death is utterly outside our control. When Śrīla Prabhupāda was once asked why the death rate was so high in India, he replied that the death rate is the same everywhere – a hundred percent.

Excessive fear can ruin one's life. Here are some of its effects:

1. Physical: Gripped by fear, the body reacts with perspiration, palpitation, and a rise in blood pressure.

If we take one step towards Kṛṣṇa, He will take thousands of steps towards us. We just need to take the initiative.

2. Social: A fearful person feels lonely and isolated and is often unable to mix with friends and society. To maintain his or her status, such a person may resort to speaking lies. Fear also causes us to hate those we fear. A child afraid of his father hates his father; an employee afraid of his boss hates his boss.

3. Occupational: Overwhelmed by fear of failure at work, people often stagnate and stop performing. "If I don't meet my targets, my boss will fire me." Such negative emotions engulf such people and ruin their lives.

4. Emotional: Fear is compared to a stream of deadly dangerous thoughts. In extreme cases, constant fear can lead to suicide.

The Root Cause

Fear arises when we accept false things as true, the temporary as eternal, illusion as reality. This world of matter is temporary and illusory, and therefore the happiness found here is of the same nature. Our body too, being made of matter, has the same nature; it can never provide us everlasting happiness. Forgetting this, we try to find happiness in the material world through the temporary body, and we find ourselves in a fearful situation. Fear of change, disruption, and ultimately death looms behind us, not allowing us to remain peaceful. However hard we may try to distract ourselves or forestall the inevitable with artificial technological facades, the jaws of time continue to devour us until we are face-to-face with inevitable death, suffering from the most heightened state of fear.

In his purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.26.16, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes,

> It is also stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.2.37), *bhayaṁ dvitīyābhiniveśataḥ syāt. Dvitīya* refers to matter, which is beyond spirit. Matter is the secondary manifestation of spirit, for matter is produced from spirit. Just as the material elements described are caused by the Supreme Lord, or the Supreme Spirit, the body is also a product of the spirit soul. Therefore, the material body is called *dvitīya,* or "the second." One who is absorbed in this second element or second exhibition of the spirit is afraid of death.

We are spirit souls, different from the material body, and we belong to the eternal, blissful spiritual world. But, for some reason, we have fallen into this world of matter, which is totally foreign to us. Here we have developed a spirit of rebellious independence, averse to the service of God, Kṛṣṇa. This has put us in a miserable situation. We are orphans who have been left to fend for ourselves. We face fear at every step of life, to some degree or another.

A Guaranteed Remedy

As soon as we understand that we are not the material body, that the material world is not our real home, and that all our possessions, positions, and relationships are temporary, the door of fearlessness flings wide open before us. We must understand that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, our loving eternal father, who is eager to have us back home with Him. All we need to do is sincerely surrender to Him, without reservation.

The Vaiṣṇava philosopher and poet Govinda Dāsa has sung, *bhajahū re mana śrī-nanda-nandana-abhaya-caraṇāravinda re:* "My dear mind, please worship the lotus feet of the son of Nanda [Kṛṣṇa], which make one fearless." To a devotee who earnestly prays for help in this way, Kṛṣṇa awards total fearlessness: "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear." (*Gītā* 18.66)

As easy as it may sound, surrendering to Kṛṣṇa is not so easy. To break off the shackles of the false belief that happiness can be found in the material world takes practice and time. Within our short life-span, we need to judiciously use, not ludicrously waste, every moment to develop the quality of surrender. If we take one step towards Kṛṣṇa, He will take thousands of steps towards us. We just need to take the initiative, and Kṛṣṇa will help us take the next step.

Whatever we achieve of this world does not remain with us forever; everything we treasure will be taken from us at the time of death. But no effort taken on the spiritual path goes in vain. The results remain with us permanently, and even the slightest effort protects us from degrading into lower forms of life. Lord Kṛṣṇa promises that His devotee never perishes. (*Gītā* 9.31)

A Modern Example

The easiest way to become fearless is by studying the lives of great devotees who exemplify the quality of surrender. Śrīla Prabhupāda, at the ripe age of sixty-nine, went to the West to preach the message of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He had no money or support, no source of income, no permanent place to stay, no guarantee he would even be fed. But he was fearless because, as he often said, he had strong faith in the holy name of Kṛṣṇa and the order of his spiritual master. During the journey to America, he suffered two heart attacks; the third one might have killed him. On the night of the second heart attack, Śrīla Prabhupāda dreamed he saw Lord Kṛṣṇa rowing a boat and asking him not to be afraid. The Lord thus assured Śrīla Prabhupāda that He would be with him. Significantly enough, Śrīla Prabhupāda's parents had given him the name Abhay Charan, "one who is fearless, having taken shelter at Lord Kṛṣṇa's feet." Prabhupāda earned that name. Out of compassion, he shared Kṛṣṇa's sublime message of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and transformed the lives of millions of people all over the world. In his purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.21.31, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "To award fearlessness to the common man is the greatest act of charity." At various places in his writings Śrīla Prabhupāda teaches us how to remain fearless. Here are some things we can do to conquer fear:

1. Chant Kṛṣṇa's holy names: *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.1.11) teaches us, "O King, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the ways of the great authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all, including those who are free from all material desires, those who are desirous of all material enjoyment, and also those who are self-satisfied by dint of transcendental knowledge." Lord Caitanya and Śrīla Prabhupāda have taught us to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra.*

2. Read and hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:* The *Bhāgavatam* (1.7.7) says, "Simply by giving aural reception to this Vedic literature, the feeling for loving devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, sprouts up at once to extinguish the fire of lamentation, illusion, and fearfulness." Śrīla Prabhupāda instituted morning and evening classes in all ISKCON temples for the study of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā.* We would all do well to take advantage.

3. Meditate on Kṛṣṇa's form: "My dear Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, You are the Supreme Soul. If one meditates upon Your transcendental body, You naturally protect him from all sources of fear, even the imminent danger of death." (*Bhāg.* 7.10.29) We can meditate on the deity form of Kṛṣṇa, at home or in the temple. As we advance in spiritual life, Kṛṣṇa will reveal to us His captivating form fully competent to dispel all fear.

4. Serve devotees: Advanced devotees of the Lord, by dint of their unflinching devotion, acquire godly qualities and always remain fearless. Serving them and following the path they have taken is a guaranteed method to acquire fearlessness. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.1.17) confirms this: "The path followed by pure devotees, who are well behaved and fully en-dowed with the best qualifications, is certainly the most auspicious path in this material world. It is free from fear, and it is authorized by the *śāstras.*"

Among all the methods described above, chanting the holy names – the religion for this age – is the best and the easiest way to dispel fear. Sincere chanting can help us instantly transcend all anxieties of this world. Chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* – Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare – will swiftly bring us closer to Kṛṣṇa and make us feel sheltered. By Kṛṣṇa's mercy we will be able to fearlessly march towards our supreme destination, Vaikuṇṭha, the place without anxiety or fear.

Puruṣottama Nitāi Dāsa is a member of the congregation at ISKCON Kolkata. He works in Tech Mahindra as an associate solution designer and blogs at krishnamagic.blogspot.in. He wishes to thank Gaurāṅga Dāsa of ISKCON Chowpatty for his lecture on fear, from which were drawn ideas central to this article.

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DOES ĀSANA EQUAL YOGA?

Nowadays everyone knows what yoga is. Or do they?

by Satyarāja Dāsa

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IN THE WEST yoga is more popular than ever.

"It's at the top of its game," says Dan Gurlitz, general manager of Koch Vision, whose distribution of Yoga Zone DVDs and videos is a "serious seven-figure business." According to Kimberly Leonard, writing in *US News & World Report,* "During the last decade the number of Americans who report practicing yoga has nearly doubled to 21 million." Other Western countries follow close behind.

If you ask the average yoga practitioner in the West what yoga is all about, you'll probably hear answers like, "It makes me feel good," "It's stimulating," "It's relaxing," "It's quite a workout," or "It keeps me in shape."

Nearly every response refers to the physical aspect of yoga practice. One would think yoga merely another exercise regimen, or at best a way to keep body, mind, and soul in some sort of integrated harmony.

The fact is, this body-centered focus is something new. Traditionally, yoga is a spiritual discipline. Even the ancient authority Patañjali deemphasized the *āsana* (postures) and *prāṇāyāma* (breath control) parts of the practice, so popular for today's yogis. Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtras* define yoga more in a spiritual sense than as the physical exercises popular today as hatha-yoga. He highlights meditation as opposed to postural exercises. *Āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* are not goals in their own right but essential tech-

niques to still the mind for achieving spiritual illumination. The second *sūtra* (concise statement) of Patañjali's work defines yoga as *yogaś citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ:* "Yoga is the control of the thought patterns of the mind." In other words, yoga is the doorway by which we can go beyond mundane mental processes; it is a method to control the mind's discomforting fluctuations. In fact, the entire practice is meant to gain mastery of the body and mind. For what purpose? The great yogis of old wanted mastery of body and mind to pursue the spirit. That was the real motivation of yoga.

Chanting Kṛṣṇa's names waters the plant of *bhakti,* which grows from the seed given by the spiritual master.

Modern-day yogi Swami Satchidananda confirms this point in his commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtras*:

> When the word *yoga* is mentioned, most people immediately think of some physical practices for stretching and stress reduction. This is one aspect of the yogic science, but actually only a very small part and relatively recent in development. The physical yoga, or Hatha yoga, was primarily designed to facilitate the real practice of yoga – namely, the understanding and complete mastery over the mind . . . . This is how one reaches the spirit.

Progressing to Bhakti

The word *yoga* means "union," giving it implications far beyond the healthful union of body, mind, and spirit sought by many modern practitioners. It's not that the body is frowned upon, but it is seen as an essential instrument for serving the divine. Hence the mandate to fine-tune it and use it as a precious tool for attaining transcendence.

Originally yoga aimed at union with God. And not in some tepid abstract sense – "I am one with God." No. It meant developing a service attitude toward God. It meant becoming one with God in purpose, which means that any yoga should progress to *bhakti-yoga,* or the yoga of devotion. Indeed, Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.47): "And of all yogis, the one with great faith who always abides in Me, thinks of Me within himself, and renders transcendental loving service to Me – he is the most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all. That is My opinion."

In this way a clear picture emerges about the methods and goals of yoga practice: One begins by controlling the body and mind, making it a finely tuned instrument. But this is just a beginning step. After that, one uses this instrument in the Lord's service. This is the perfection of yoga, technically called *bhakti-yoga.* In the end, then, to use a poorly tuned instrument (a body not tuned by hatha-yoga) in Kṛṣṇa's service is better than using a perfectly tuned instrument (a yogi's body) for other things.

One of the great banes of modern yoga practice is that by developing a superior bodily vehicle one is likely to fall from the spiritual path, enamored of the physical rewards of regular discipline, which are many. Patañjali warns against such yoga merits and other, more metaphysical ones, because they can distract a person on the spiritual path. "One must be unattached to these supernatural powers, or one will not attain absorption in the Supreme. Indeed, these very powers can become the seeds of bondage and failure." (*Yoga-sūtras* 3.51)

Beware of Goodness

Yoga tends to elevate its practitioners to a state of *sattva-guṇa* (goodness), which can be advantageous – but also harmful. The advantages are obvious: enhanced consciousness, inclination to pious activity, a suitable environment for further advancement on the path. But yoga can also hinder practitioners because *sattva-guṇa* can cause attachment to one's yogic view and way of life. Comfortable in their conceptions of spirituality, yogis may feel they already have knowledge and don't need further progress. If they deem themselves happy, they have a hard time believing they could be happier still.

But higher realms exist. Ancient yoga texts describe the happiness derived from ordinary yoga practice as being like the water in a calf's footprint when compared to the ocean of bliss found in the practice of *bhakti-yoga.* That is to say, whether or not one practices hatha-yoga, one would do well to gradually move into the realm of *bhakti* and, with a mood of love, render spiritual service, developing a selfless attitude under the direction of a bona fide spiritual teacher.

How to Start

What does *bhakti-yoga* look like, and how can one engage in its practices in a simple and direct way even while engaged in ordinary yoga? First, learn mantra meditation, the practice of chanting Kṛṣṇa's holy names, from someone who knows, someone who has received these transcendental names from a master whose lineage is respected for bestowing sacred sound. Chanting waters the plant of *bhakti,* which grows from the seed given by the spiritual master.

Kīrtana, or call-and-response chanting, is all the rage now in yoga studios throughout the world, but one must learn to chant properly for it to have full potency and produce the true fruits of *bhakti-yoga.* By proper chanting one becomes privy to the prescribed means of self-realization in the current age, known as Kali-yuga. As the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (12.3.52) says, "Whatever result was obtained in Satya-yuga by meditating on Viṣṇu, in Tretā-yuga by performing sacrifices, and in Dvāpara-yuga by serving the Lord's lotus feet can be obtained in Kali-yuga simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra.*"

This chanting is the essence of *bhakti-yoga,* which is the essence of yoga in general. Thus chanting is the essence of the essence. This is so because by chanting one learns to give one's heart to Kṛṣṇa, the soul of all souls. One learns how to truly unite with the divine. Patañjali, too, recommends *īśvara-praṇidhāna,* or giving one's life to God with a mood of full devotion. Although most yogis today don't know it, this is what yoga is really all about.

Satyarāja Dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, is a BTG associate editor and founding editor of the Journal of Vaishnava Studies. *He has written more than thirty books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness and lives near New York City.*

Calendar

This calendar is calculated for Mayapur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. For the exact dates for your area, go to ***www.vaisnavacalendar.com****.*

Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in His disciplic succession.

Month of Govinda
(*February 23 – March 23*)

MARCH

5 – Vijayā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

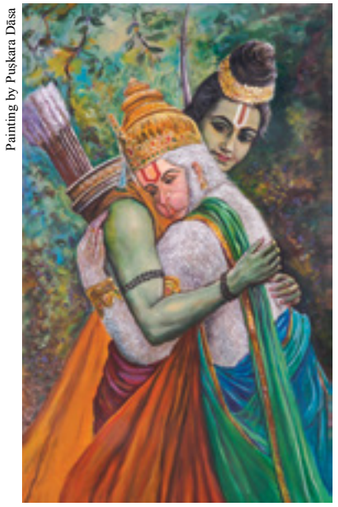
6 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Īśvara Purī, Lord Caitanya's spiritual master.

8 – Śrī Śiva Rātri, a day in honor of Lord Śiva.

10 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, the great devotee in the disciplic line from Lord Caitanya who confirmed Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's discovery of Lord Caitanya's birthplace.

19 – Amalakī-vrata Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

Painting by Puṣkara Dāsa



Lord Rāmacandra and Hanumān

20 – Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, the spiritual master of Lord Caitanya's spiritual master.

23 – Śrī Gaura Pūrṇimā, the appearance anniversary of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself in the role of His own devotee. Fasting till moonrise.

Month of Viṣṇu
(*March 24 – April 22*)

APRIL

1 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, one of Lord Caitanya's principal associates.

4 – Dvādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans for Pāpamocanī Ekādaśī.

11 – Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānujācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the eleventh century.

15 – Śrī Rāma Navamī, the appearance anniversary of Lord Rāmacandra. Fasting till sunset, followed by feasting.

17 – Kāmadā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

22 – Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vasanta Rāsa, Lord Kṛṣṇa's springtime *rāsa* dance. Balarāma Rāsa Yātrā, Lord Balarāma's *rāsa* dance. Appearance anniversary of Hanumānjī, eternal servant of Lord Rāma. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita, a follower of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

Happy Days of Struggle

TRAVELING TO Vrindavan or Mayapur from most places in America takes around thirty hours in cars, planes, and waiting areas. Devotees who make the trip tend to arrive exhausted.

Imagine Śrīla Prabhupāda's journey to America in 1965. It wasn't thirty hours, but thirty-five days – onboard a small, weathered cargo ship. The *Jaladuta* was no luxury ocean-liner. Smelling of rust and grease and exhaust, it rocked and listed for hours on end, offering no escape for relief.

After docking for a few hours in Boston, the *Jaladuta* went on to New York City. But Prabhupāda's journey wasn't over. He traveled by bus to Pittsburgh, another nine hours or so, and ended his odyssey with a one-hour car ride to Butler. He arrived at four in the morning.

Prabhupāda spent only a month in Butler. He lived at the YMCA and gave some *Bhagavad-gītā* talks at the home of his sponsors. But he had set his sights on New York City.

In celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of ISKCON, we naturally think of Prabhupāda's early days in New York, leading up to the incorporation of his Society. The only contact Prabhupāda had in New York was Dr. Ramamurti Mishra, who lived on upscale Riverside Drive and ran a fifth-floor yoga studio on 72nd Street, about seven blocks away. The studio had an office with an attached windowless room, and that's where Prabhupāda lived from November 1965 till early February 1966. Because the studio had a bathroom but no kitchen, Prabhupāda had to walk to Dr. Mishra's home every day to cook during those frigid winter months. (Though Dr. Mishra had given Prabhupāda a coat, we know he wore pointed rubber shoes around that time, and I've often wondered if he'd gotten winter footwear.) Prabhupāda wanted a place of his own where he could teach *Bhagavad-gītā* regularly, so in February he moved to the third floor of the same building, into an empty office with no facility to cook or bathe. He slept on the floor and sat behind his metal trunk to type letters, translate, and teach.

Prabhupāda had brought a typewriter from India, and a student of Dr. Mishra's had given him a reel-to-reel tape recorder. Then someone broke into his room and stole them both.

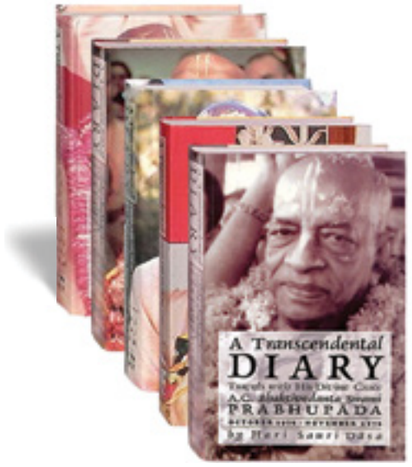
In April Prabhupāda moved to the Bowery, the worst part of the city. Derelicts sheltered in the entrance to his apartment building, where he shared a large open room with a young man who seemed a promising student at first. But one day, in an LSD-induced rage, he threatened Prabhupāda, who had to escape to the street. Prabhupāda found temporary lodging in the apartment of an acquaintance, much to the displeasure of the young man's live-in girlfriend. Finally, Michael Grant (now Mukunda Goswami) and others rented the storefront and apartment at 26 Second Avenue that became the first temple of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, incorporated that July.

This history contains many spiritual lessons, and can evoke various emotions and questions. We might wonder how Prabhupāda felt as he faced one hardship after another. In the *Caitanya-bhāgavata* (*Madhya* 9.240), Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura gives a clue: "Know for certain that whatever worldly distress is seen in a Vaiṣṇava is actually spiritual happiness."

We can view Prabhupāda's story on different levels. When we consider his sacrifices in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we can feel deep gratitude. When we consider his ecstasy in the constant company of his guru and Kṛṣṇa while making those sacrifices, we can gain inspiration for our own service to the Lord.

– Nāgarāja Dāsa

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Legacy



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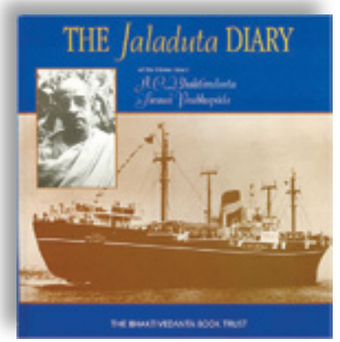

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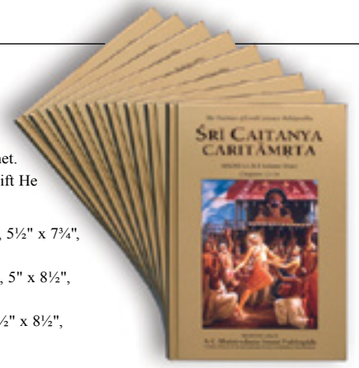

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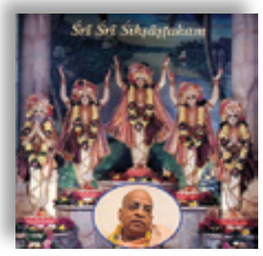

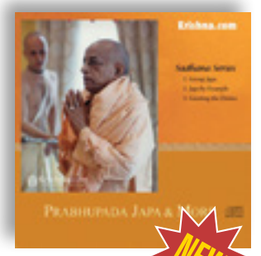

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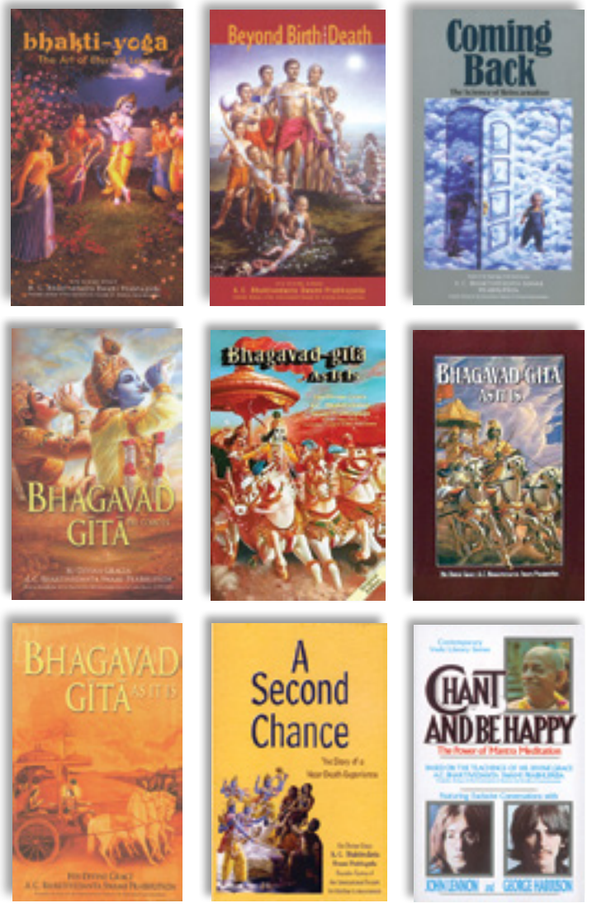

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Vedic Thoughts

If one is not attracted by the transcendental nature of Kṛṣṇa, one is sure to be attracted to material enjoyment, thus to become implicated in the clinging network of virtuous and sinful activities and to continue material existence by transmigrating from one material body to another. Only in Kṛṣṇa consciousness can one achieve the highest perfection of life.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 4.35, Purport

What the *Upaniṣads* describe as the impersonal Brahman is but the effulgence of His body, and the Lord known as the Supersoul is but His localized plenary portion. Lord Caitanya is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa Himself, full with six opulences. He is the Absolute Truth, and no other truth is greater than or equal to Him.

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 1.3

Devotional service is the propensity to give Kṛṣṇa pleasure. The endeavor to make oneself happy is nondevotional service and is the source of misery.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura
Amṛta Vāṇī: Nectar of Instructions for Immortality

Distress is caused by five things: nescience, false ego, material attachments, envy, and mundane engrossment, all of which essentially represent different aspects of the mode of ignorance.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura
Mādhurya-kādambinī, Second Shower

Whatever a self-realized soul in India will speak, a self-realized soul in another part of the world will speak. A devotee in Vaikuṇṭha will also speak the same thing, because there are no material qualities in the conclusions of pure, liberated souls. Therefore the conclusions cannot be different.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
Tattva-viveka, Chapter 1

Of all the eternal living entities, one [the Supreme Personality of Godhead] is the supreme eternal. Of all conscious entities one [the Supreme Personality of Godhead] is the supreme conscious entity who supplies the needs of everyone else. The wise souls who worship Him in His abode attain everlasting peace. Others cannot.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.13 and *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.2.13

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the source of genuine happiness. Nothing else can bring one actual happiness. Only the Supreme Personality of Godhead can bring one happiness. For this reason one should inquire about the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad 7.25.1

Persons who seriously follow these methods of achieving Me, which I have personally taught, attain auspiciousness in the form of My personal abode, which authorities understand as the Supreme Absolute Truth.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.20.37

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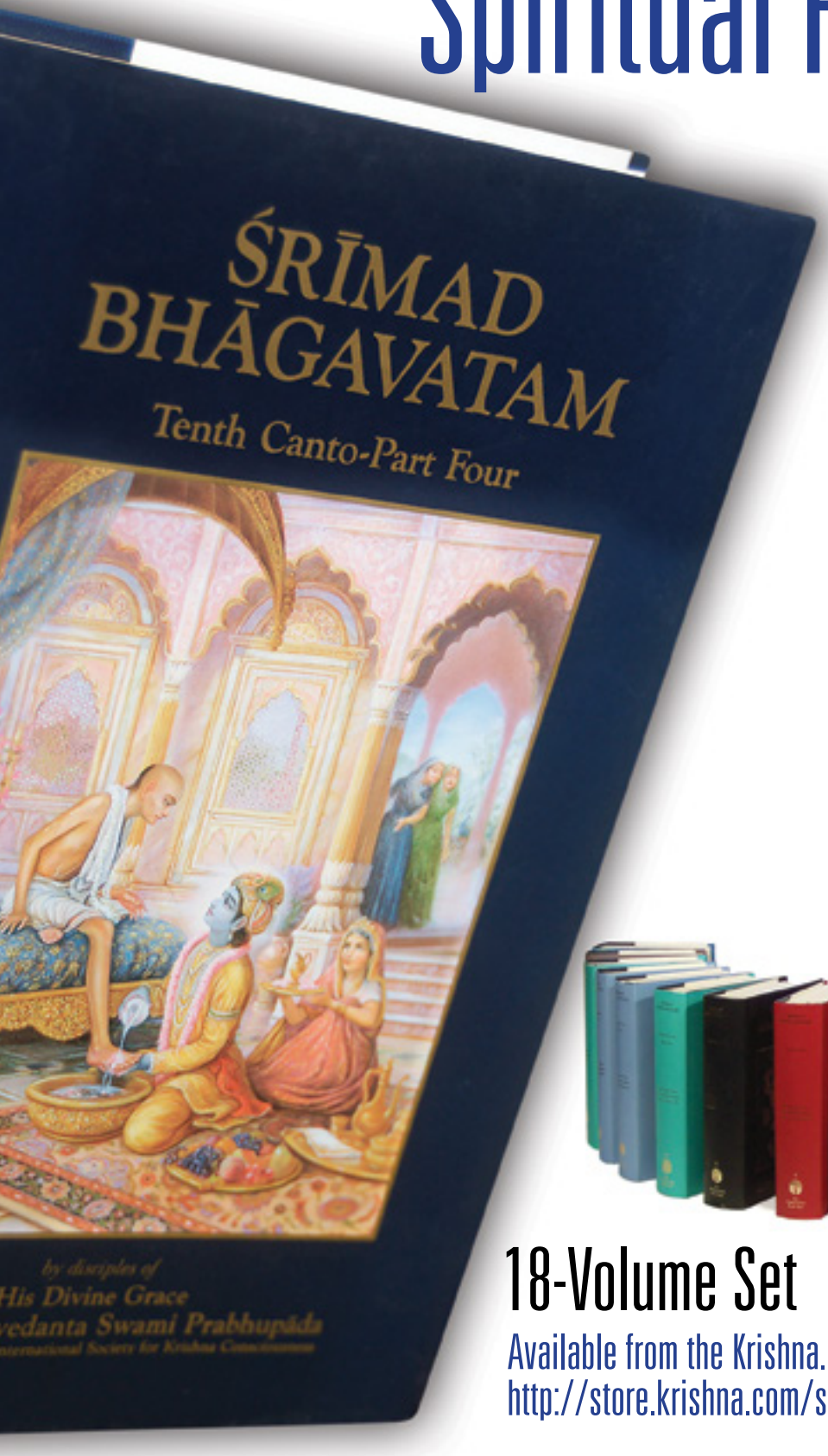

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